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What Would One Have?

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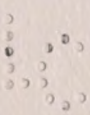
A Woman's Confessions

"It was not cut short; and in the end it learnt, through tears and much pain, that Holiness is an infinite compassion for others; that Greatness is to take the common things of life and walk truly among them; that Happiness is a great love and much serving." — *Olive Schreiner.*



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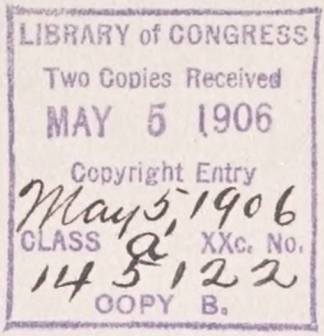

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What Would One Have?

I

"And so I write, and write, and write,
Just for the sake of writing to you, dear."

DEAR ARTHUR: —

My soul's friend — yes, I believe I can, with perfect abandon, tell you all. There are moments when you seem, in reality, my other self. I feel it will bring relief to lay my breast up close to your own while we mutually feel the beating of the Infinite Heart through an "uncut cord."

Can I tell you all, all, from infancy to widow-

hood? — up through the baby-girl days, — up through the serious sorrows of childhood's inexperience, — misty maidenhood, — wondering, dreaming young womanhood, — conventional marriage, widowhood, and at last — ?

As you already know, Arthur, I was born and bred on one of the large rough farms of western New York. Looking back to the early seventies, I remember myself a chubby little tot, roaming about in pursuit of happiness — my inalienable right. Abstract thoughts of life and liberty came later; but, for the time, like the ordinary robust baby, I absolutely sought and demanded happiness. The selfish, coercive spirit was not wanting, and at this my parents no doubt felt relief, if they thought about the matter at all. I should not die, as the good children do; they would raise up unto themselves a daughter, and mother should have, what she so much needed, some one to help her.

In pursuit of happiness! A lisping toddler — daring to venture forth on such a quest! Poor baby! Wonderment, even then, why all the beautiful spools and buttons must be taken out before they gave me the empty boxes. Was it always going to be empty boxes — empty boxes?

Nevertheless, I grew and waxed strong. There were five of us children, — two brothers older than myself, a brother and a sister younger. I often catch myself looking at little children and wondering if life means something of satisfaction to them. We hear much about the joys of childhood — as if a child could scarcely be a child and not be happy!

I do not remember myself as a happy child. No love was ever manifest upon that old farm, and I believe here rested the secret of my child-hunger. Nobody ever kissed anybody, no one ever said a love-word. It seemed all work and worry. Why didn't some one stop

long enough to say, "My darling baby!" I was so lonesome, so tiny, and so stranger-like! But they were all too busy, and so the tragedy went on. Arthur, I believe no suffering can quite equal that of a child. It has not learned by experience the law of universal utility, which comes with more mature analysis. "We all begin by singing with the birds and running fast with June days, hand in hand." The "bitter and convincing times," however, are soon to follow. Perhaps Nature does not intend to satisfy her offspring over-much. Indeed, for myself, grateful as I am, I must say that the real satisfactions have come to me only at rare moments — in glints and snatches, when, like Herr Teufelsdröckh, with quick tympanum I could hear the very grass grow, and my universal kinship became thus revealed to me.

Yes, the strenuous life had stridden out there upon that old farm. Milk-pans and milk-pails were there, butter to make, bread

to bake, stockings to mend. These, with the necessary scoldings and whippings, left no place for love and caresses among the seven beings, two elders and five juniors, who stayed several years at that given point in space.

2

"For mark you, men will dream. The most we can ask is, that the dream be not in too glaring discord with the reality."

THE wind blows gustily this March day, and the lively little rain-drops, striking against the window-pane, importune me for recognition, and take me out of my moody reminiscence — almost giving the *soul-touch.*

I must use that word soul often, Arthur. To me it expresses reality — the innermost essence of a thing — as no other word does. Can any atom of matter stand outside of consciousness? Perhaps outside of self-consciousness; but does not manifestation itself necessarily imply a certain consciousness? Am I akin to these rain-drops? I feel I am. Brother spirits, all hail!

3

"Of little plaintive voices innocent,
Of life in separate courses flowing out
Like some great river to some outward main,
I hear life — life!"

"CROSS lots" to the country school-house, which stood on a corner of the farm, was the next turn in experience. I now came into contact with the outside world, and began a deeper study of man's relation to man. I can see that old school-room now, with its home-made desks painted a slate-blue, and further decorated with pencil-markings and knife-carvings. I can see those rows of grinning urchins, who came in from the various nooks and corners of the "deestrict"— what reverence I had, at this period, for the "big" boys and girls who did those examples in long-division on the blackboard, more puzzling to

my childish mind than were the Egyptian hieroglyphics to Champollion!

My envy and admiration were much exercised over the buxom beauty of Edna and Cora, the two belles of the school, who received so much honor and attention. Well, Emerson says we can lose reverence for things without losing our reverence. At eight years my reverence was great for examples in long-division, and for the big boys and girls who did them. I have held other things in reverence since; shifting my base often, resting my lever sometimes on one fulcrum and sometimes on another. Praise God, I still have my reverence left, though reverence for persons and things has almost perished. Only minor traces of the barbarian now remain; and, through much jostling, I incline more and more to "hitch my wagon to a star."

4

"God's kindergarten, — the world of men and women."

IT was at this period that I told my first lie. It was no cherry-tree affair. I simply wanted to see my name coupled in writing with the name of Archie Brown, my most admired "gentleman friend." Others had their names so written, — I must have mine.

The temptation was too great, and so I wrote what I wanted on the blue-drab of the entry door. My satisfaction was small compared with my discomfort and chagrin, when a torturing rival discovered my weakness and folly. I declared emphatically, I never wrote any such "horrid thing," — I said I "just hated" Archie Brown, — and then I cried, partly from shame, partly because of the lies I had told. Poor womankind!

From my mother I had heard about the lake of fire awaiting the bad ones of earth — I trembled with fear. Then I remembered that my father had said the place was a hoax, like all the other doctrines taught by "chicken-eating" preachers. And while I hoped my father was right, I was in hell but didn't know it. I didn't recognize the place, because I thought blisters were made only by literal fires. Poor humankind!

5

"Of a man or a nation we inquire therefore, first of all, What religion had they?"

I THINK, Arthur, my early religious environment, being vital, will not be devoid of interest to you. Both father and mother had been raised strictly Orthodox, of the long-drawn, never smile sort. Father had revolted and was called by his neighbors an infidel. Those people were not discriminating. Infidel was an all-round term, signifying everything that was bad — ungodlike. I cannot say my father was an ungodly man. He was passing out of the old into the new, and made the quite common mistake of staying too long on negative ground. Renouncing such old faiths and traditions as were in evident decay was not enough; through many years he seemed

to take a vindictive delight in reading and quoting from such literature as was written directly for the purpose of breaking down old ideals. To burn and clean the ground for a future crop is well. To plant and sow the seed is well, too. Iconoclasts have a work to do, certainly; but they seldom give us soul-food, and how shall we live without bread? A plastic, receptive mind ready for inflow or outflow, is one thing; and the man who hardens in the negative, and labels himself a free-thinker, may be quite another. Yes, let us have the builders as well as the breakers, that out of retained reverence the children of men may grow forever, by rearing new structures to the ideal. To me as to all children, my father was an oracle of wisdom; and so, if I entered my mental life bound at all, it was with a fetter of negativeness, which is no less a fetter.

6

"But I could not hide
My quickening inner life from those at watch.
They saw a light at a window now and then,
They had not set there. Who had set it there?"

THERE was a distinct phase of my child-life, Arthur, that you may think unique, if not altogether unnatural. I was given to moods resembling depression, though that term does not altogether define my feeling. Usually these came when I was lying awake morning or evening, the scene ending with tears and sobbing. Sometimes my mother found me so, and to her natural questionings I could give no rational answers. Analysis was beyond me then; I think I understand better now. Listening to father as he read aloud, during his scanty spare moments, from the *New York World*, from the county newspaper, or from

Colonel Ingersoll's lectures, I gradually gathered the unwholesome impression of discord and danger abroad and powerful.

As with Prince Gautama, a great burden came to rest upon my heart. There was so much wrong and suffering in the world; nobody seemed to love anybody anywhere. Why, why did they do so? Why were they not good? Why did they all prey upon each other? Why did not some one tell them, if they would only love one another, how happy they all would be, and nobody be hurt any more?

I am very grateful for these experiences when I look back now. I believe these touches came from the instinct that sometimes manifests itself in great art-rhythm attesting the persistence and reality of the good and beautiful. Perhaps it might properly be called the very Messianic instinct itself, in embryo.

7

"Stay, O stay! . . .
It cannot be! They pass away!
Other themes demand thy lay;
Thou art no more a child!"

THE pleasantest experiences of this time were those when uncles and aunts came, with cousins of all ages; or when, two or three times a year, we were all bundled into the big sleigh in winter, or into the "democrat" wagon in summer, for a day or two of outing at grandfather's.

Everything was so novel and interesting at grandpa's! Even the cows had their own distinct individuality over against our "Cherry" and "Stub-horn." The milk at grandfather's had a peculiar flavor all its own — milked into wooden instead of tin pails, and strained through a cloth instead of

through a strainer, as at home. The bed-sink, the rag carpet, the hair sofa, and each piece of cheap bric-a-brac, were fraught with impressiveness.

There were bees humming, ducks waddling, and turkeys strutting, all so wonderful, so wonderful! I remember that on one occasion the old gobbler very early took a dislike to the bright red print dress I wore, and kept me fleeing for safety before his autocratic presence. The great shaggy shepherd-dog was a world of wonder in himself. With children, as with grown-ups, the familiar, the commonplace, cease to be wonderful, magical. Curiosity, wonderment, worship of the far away, lure us on. In new scenes and strange faces we hope to find more lasting satisfaction. Our landscapes are not so beautiful, the men we meet are not so wise or loving — we will wander afar. Poor "perennial globe-trotters"! Poor happiness-pursuers! It was later, when I went to live at grandfather's,

and a grass-widow aunt scolded me for breaking the glass milk-pitcher, and grandma made me sit a half-hour with folded arms while grandpa read the Bible and offered prayers, that I cried to go back home. As Sam Walter Foss says:

"I want to go somewhere! — I want to get back!
Is the shuttle-cock cry of the heart."

8

"'Tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do."

GOOD old Puritanical grandma would put to shame Matt Quay or Tom Platt, when she wire-pulled grandpa into going down to see Sophia, my mother, in order to get me taken home. A very mild suggestion of the kind at first brought forth a series of ejaculations:

"I ain't no night-hawk, I ain't! Got to git them oats in 'fore it rains. Some folks ain't never contented else they're a-chasin' off somewheres."

Good old grandma knew; — she hadn't heard anything about language being used by men to conceal their thoughts, but to me she said softly:

"Get ready just as fast as you can."

We were none too early in our preparations. Old sorrel "Jim" soon came lumbering up to the door, drawing a freshly greased buggy, and grandfather shouted:

"Sha'n't wait two minutes for ye! Pile in; we ought to 'a' been on the road an hour ago."

In we quickly clambered, and off Jim shambled on his fourteen mile drive, while grandpa beguiled the way with a characteristic humming-tune, all his own, broken in upon, every now and then, by "G'lang, lazy bones!" or "G'lang, saphead!" When Jim responded mildly to the gentlest tap of the old stub whip, grandfather said, "Then g'lang, when I tell ye!"

When we reached our destination, the greetings were hardly over before grandfather began to talk of going home, of the oats, and of the rain. But he smiled when the boys commenced to dig bait and make general preparations for a fishing-excursion.

He took great delight in telling of his early prowess as a sportsman and fisherman. Grandmother's New England piety kept her exact to the letter, and she constantly acted as a balance-wheel while grandfather related his adventures.

On one occasion, when he told of the marvelous "ketch" of fish he had once taken from the Alleghany river, grandma disputing, he said with great excitement:

"I ain't goin' to give in! Didn't Nancy bring down two pails to hold 'em all?"

Grandma replied very seriously:

"Well, — mebbe. It would be jest as wicked ter tell it a little tew small as it would ter tell it a little tew big."

They both fell asleep at last, at a good old age, — grandma conscientious, and grandpa too, with all his exaggerations. The gentle, suggestive manner with which he used the whip on old Jim's back was to me homely evidence of a sympathetic heart.

9

"Oh, there are brighter dreams than those of Fame,
Which are the dreams of love."

THE semi-annual donation for the poorly paid Methodist preacher, who preached in the school-house every two weeks, was a great social function for the country people of the time. Such an event was approaching; the very afternoon of the evening was upon us, and each family and each member of each family was busy and breathless.

Mother was to bake a cake — a real frosted one, and she was afraid of her luck. She decided upon a tall pyramid, as they were the fad among country housekeepers. Susan Green, the brag cook of the neighborhood, had made one at the last donation one layer

higher than her ambitious neighbors, and for six long months had been alternately envied and worshiped as the lioness of the hour.

I heard my mother express her very decided feeling upon the subject, often. She said she thought if her "man" had a mortgage on his place, she would leave tall cake-baking to women whose husbands didn't owe anything. She further intimated the bare possibility that poor, deaf John, the other half of Susan, fared no better than he should at the hands of this unthrifty sharer of his bed and board. Still others hinted at something worse in the life of the garrulous Susan than riotous wasting of substance. All the sweetness, all the bitterness found in petty scandal or neighborhood gossip, came to these good-meaning country dames over that one extra layer of pyramid cake.

Poor Susan's ambition came near being her downfall in the community. I think now the instruction of Cardinal Wolsey, well acted

upon, would have saved her many a withering glance from her less fortunate sisters:

> "Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition:
> By that sin fell the angels; how can man then,
> The image of his Maker, hope to win by 't?"

Alas! not one soul of us had ever heard of the bard of Avon, so we groped madly on in pursuit of happiness, knocking our heads against each other, both hurt, nothing gained; — wasting energy, on we rushed. We ran so fast we never thought of looking at our side for the thing we sought. We could not see. Strange paradox: luminosity blinds us, and we call it dark.

Supper is nearly ready at the donation. The men of the congregation are gathered with great dignity in the big "spare room," while the worthy women-folk diligently apply themselves to culinary arrangements. Later-day salads and tutti-frutti dishes are not here, but other good things are revealed hidden

away in the mammoth baskets, and the odor of steeping coffee reaches us young people playing "Snap-and-catch-'em" and "Needle's-eye" in the hall-like chamber above.

"The young folks are to eat first with the preacher." So says Martha Brown, who orders the ceremonies with bustling importance.

Lo! he approaches — a boy! — a young man! — a something, anyway, wearing no merino skirt, as I myself did, but a real "pair of pants"! It couldn't be. Oh, blissful moment! — he really was asking me to supper with him. Those downy lips said it. I saw them move nervously. 'Twas true! Do not laugh, — I was almost thirteen!

I was a woman really, now! I could wear my dresses long, hereafter, and assume new dignities! True, he wasn't the one I would have chosen out of the crowd of boys. I liked Archie better, for his hair was black and curled, while Anson's was light and so

straight it pitched awkwardly over his forehead. But then, what would one have? I was chosen by some one. A new, delightful, even thrilling experience was upon me.

Only last year I called upon this light-haired, freckle-faced youth of other days, — now a prosperous lawyer of Buffalo. The world has rubbed off all the greenness, and he has money, it is said, — yea, even filthy lucre has he! But he could not awaken again in my heart — I know — one momentary heart-throbbing such as he gave me when, that autumn night, we ate together our pumpkin pie, preserves, and pyramid cake.

IO

"A youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice,
A banner with the strange device,
Excelsior!"

AT fourteen I went out to teach my first school and earn my first dollar. Appalling thought! Other souls were to receive impetus and instruction from a child just in her teens. But what of that? Nature drops her supreme gift, a fresh new plastic being, into the arms of girls as young.

A strange, careless-seeming old dame is Nature, but she knows her own, and she never flurries or gets red in the face. O great matrix of infinitude in which we and all things are cradled so safely, from whence come fear and restlessness! Even in the house where I myself now went to room, with

food and fuel brought from home, — even there I found a girl of my own age, married to a man of thirty, and about to become a mother.

I do not accuse my father of any mercenary spirit in putting me into this school; though, having burdened himself with a new indebtedness for a land purchase that made him poorer, I remember he gladly appropriated the cheque for my wages, and I never saw it more. I suppose it was "benevolent assimilation." High sounding words, and good phrasing, Arthur, have covered a multitude of sins from time immemorial.

When I cried myself to sleep the first night of school-teaching, I had myself chiefly to thank for the pickle I was in. I wanted to teach. I had played "teach school" many times at home.

I had painted my picture. I would have a fine time! What satisfaction to ring the bell and see every little soul-atom obey automatic-

ally! Order is Heaven's first law. I could see them sitting there before me, so demure, conscientiously waiting to do my slightest bidding, and I would walk among them with the feeling of divine right.

Ideas founded upon these premises have brought crowned heads to the block, and blockheads to crowns and other trouble. My chief motive was ambition, with perhaps a sprinkling of high aspiration. (I desire, Arthur, to speak truth to you!) There is a great gulf between these two attitudes of mind, though the world seems not yet to discriminate carefully between them. Aspiration is a latent soul-quality. I had not yet been whipped into the kingdom. Even as others before me, I had commenced to "beat my wings against the bars of the environment set close about me, and I wanted a finer life."

I would read, earn money, and father would let me go to the academy. I would

"be somebody." Father's mother, Laura Beecher, came from New Haven, he told us, and belonged to the original stock of "brainy Beechers." I had never seen this grandmother, who died early, but old pioneers spoke of her as "a lady born and bred." I believed then in kingly pedigree, and my blood tingled. I have grown to believe more in the One Life, and in the utility of suffering. No soul can boast over another. Souls are not comparable; for they are of one stuff — plastic, evolutionary, compelled by necessity to become great Nature's democrats.

I need not go into the details of that four months of teaching. When March was over, and I didn't have the fires to build on cold mornings, and when the bread and butter odor, so characteristic of close school-rooms, had departed, life became monotonously bearable.

Often a stubborn girl or mischievous boy

made me fearful of more serious trouble, for I had been told the teacher before me was obliged to leave with an unfinished term. But though sometimes severely tried, still I had my great hope strong within me: I would bide my time, go to school, and "be somebody."

Something ludicrous, something pathetic, touches me when I look back and see that little girl-teacher going to and fro in her barren round. My mother had neither time nor talent for dressmaking. I remember the dress I wore most of the time during that term, — an old alpaca of mother's, made over by some neighbor thought clever with the needle. She had made my dress, overskirt, and basque, trimmed with plaiting. I had grown since the making, and it had become what might properly be called short-waisted and out of date. June was with us, and my thick-lined waist was as uncomfortable as it was unbecoming.

Never mind, I would soon be through, have money, and perhaps sometime go to college. If I had no new and stylish dress, nevertheless I had my great hope. No one could daunt my spirit or take that from me.

II

"And lived my life, and thought my thoughts, and prayed
My prayers without a vicar."

ONE day a carriage halted before the school-house door. I recognized my dude cousin Frank, from Fieldsboro', who called me out to introduce me to two charming ladies occupying the back seat.

"These are our cousins who have come from the east to spend a few weeks among the New York relatives. They are mother and daughter, Cousin Mary Curtis, — Cousin Caroline Beecher Curtis."

There they sat, — and there stood I, self-conscious, blushing, and stammering. It was Friday afternoon, — would I not ride home with them? They were going to stay a week at my home. I soon dismissed school

and seated myself beside Cousin Frank, in front. I knew they were looking at that short-waisted alpaca basque, and the thought hurt, — oh, how it hurt! Then I remembered my hope, and I think I felt as Samantha says she did when Josiah told her she didn't have any brains. She didn't care, for she knew she had!

A tragedy was going on, Arthur. How I suffered during the visit of those city cousins! They had real culture — what Matthew Arnold rightly names sweetness and light. They talked about our beautiful hills and the advantages of rural life, but I couldn't see it. It all seemed very commonplace and mean to me; I felt chained to a death-in-life existence. I almost loathed myself. I had not asked to come, but some inevitable necessity had taken me out of the Unknown and placed me here. I had the blood of my beautiful and cultured cousin — I almost felt that I longed more than she for

the "ideal, better called the real"; but here we were, alike, yet diverse. Was there a God? Was there justice in the world? Perhaps not. My father was right! — for even mortals were not so unkind to mortals.

I had not suffered enough! It was a long time, with much to endure, before I found a sure anchor.

That week's visit was a week of tears for me. My one word to my cousin, when we separated, was, "I'll be somebody yet, Carrie."

I had life, I had liberty; I would yet find happiness.

I 2

"Sublimest danger, over which none weeps,
When any young, wayfaring soul goes forth
Alone, unconscious of the perilous road,
The day-sun dazzling in his limpid eyes,
To thrust his own way, he an alien, through
The world of books."

COUSIN Caroline Beecher had gone, but her influence had left its impression. My longing for better things was increased ten-fold, while the obstructions and impediments in my path seemed numberless. If I could gain access to proper literature! But who was to guide me, and where were the books to be had? Some one told me of an old library, containing a few volumes, the property of the school district, and I hunted it up. I found the books piled away in the corner of an attic room.

I wish memory would serve me to give the title of every book in the pile. I found one that interested me greatly. It was intended to show bad people how bad they were, and frighten them into being good. It contained many bright-colored pictures, in harmony with the picture opposite the title-page which represented the devil with a horn in the middle of his forehead, and with a long lizzard-like tail finished with a fork. It didn't take a great stretch of imagination to settle in my youthful mind the sole office of that fork. Some implement of the sort would work most conveniently, pitching wicked people into the lake that was also represented in the picture, seething with fire and brimstone.

I thought of the one lie I had told; but I didn't feel very much of a shiver, for I had begun to believe that father was all right and that there was a mistake somewhere.

I selected two books: a life of Henry Clay, and Locke "On the Human Under-

standing," both old-fashioned, russet leather-covered, printed in small type and smelling of dust. I tried to become interested, but what with the odor of the yellow pages and the fine type I found the road to erudition uninviting enough. I was so hungry to glean a morsel of knowledge somewhere that I took them down frequently, from the chestnut mantel back of the kitchen stove. Explain to me why a dog gnaws at an old dry bone, and I will explain the satisfaction that came to me from even holding those old volumes.

One day I came into contact with a book called "Edna Browning," written by Mary J. Holmes. A neighbor had received it from a young woman living in Fieldsboro'; — would she let me read it? She would. I think I never ate nor slept until I had seen the poor young Edna through all her experiences. Oh, what a bliss 'twould be to have all such stories one could devour! I returned the volume, telling its owner I should never rest

contented until I had read every book ever written by Mary J. Holmes. My father said it was "made-up stuff" — all stories were made up — a lie. He never wanted me to spend my time reading things unless they were really true. I wondered greatly, like the little Lucy who was told by her mother she must eat no more jam. "Mamma," said the little philosopher, "why is it that everything we want to do is either wicked or will make us sick?"

A few months passed. An aunt came to see us, — a woman proud, who wanted to "keep up," as she called it. I told her I was exceedingly ambitious — so were Cæsar and Susan Green. She said she had a book written by a man named Shakespeare. She would lend it to me, for all the people who "keep up" must know something of this man Shakespeare. She said she couldn't see why they made such a fuss about him, for she had read the book a little, and in some places

the language was not fit to be heard. I asked her if it was "made-up stuff," as father was very much opposed to anything made up. She said she didn't really know, but, if other people considered it the thing, it didn't matter whether it was true or not. So the book was sent to me, and I was thus introduced to the myriad-minded one, who knew all the heart's gamut to perfection and played with its mysteries as Emerson says little children play with grey-beards and in churches.

I was no prodigy at fourteen, and the full appreciation of my newly discovered treasure came by degrees. So much the better, for the source seemed exhaustless. I was in a new world, with companions to satisfy every mood and fancy known to human experience. In sunny times I could sport fancy-free with Celia and Rosalind, in the forest of Arden; but I much loved to live among those who suffered, and hours were spent in agony with Hamlet and Desdemona.

A serious illness, occasioned by a fall, brought me close to life's border-line. My mother came tearfully to tell me of my condition, and of the possible result. I cannot explain my feelings even yet, but I was almost happy.

I was facing the old, unanswered question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" But I was not afraid. Intuitively I felt I could trust the Universe; and then — the old experiences had tried me so! If we were given another chance, perhaps I could come into an environment more congenial, like fortunate Cousin Carrie; and so I waited, patient, till the crisis was over, and life forced me back once more into its mystic mazes.

13

"I did not die . . . slowly, by degrees
I woke, rose up . . . where was I? in the world;
For uses therefore I must count worth while."

DEAR old Jason Bumpus, with his jolly, good-natured spouse Olive, lived in a cabin up on the hillside. Five acres of stony soil, a cow, a pig, some chickens, and a mule, were the external means of sustenance for this old couple. And yet I have never seen but one other example of ideal conjugal bliss. The cases were unlike in nearly every particular, except that both lived the unconventional and simple life and that both were contented and happy. Junk collecting and tin peddling, by means of the mule, yielded Jason an extra penny now and then; but on the whole this happy pair lived above the strenuous.

Everybody laughed at and derided old Jason. The boys played pranks on him, for sport, and still his old eyes were always sparkling and his face was always smiling. His form was tall and angular, and his voice was a sharp falsetto, but he carried about somewhere under that old "slouch" hat and weather-beaten coat the secret for which most of us waste many years of energy.

I was sitting on the old porch settee, convalescing slowly from my illness. The doctor had said I might never be strong again; — what then would become of my glorious hope? Tears came to my eyes, but I brushed them away, and looked up to see old Jason, mule and all, approaching.

"Hello! little gal," he sang out, in his high, peepy voice. "How you gettin' along? Don't feel very chipper yet, I reckon, — guess I'll let Bill rest a minute while we visit," he said, coming up the plank walk and patting my head.

"You've had a pretty hard time, hain't ye? Look pale and kinder unhappy fer a gal as oughter be rosy and cherky. Wouldn't ye like to visit a little with an old man? Seems like sometimes it does a body good to talk things over with some one."

I had had so little of demonstrated affection in my fifteen years that the old man's tender concern won my confidence at once. I told him of my great hope and what the doctor had said.

"Well, well, it's just's I thought, — ye want to pick a few stars, don't ye? I tuck my turn at star-gazin' once. Animals, babies, and wild Injuns put a deal of stock in big glitterin' things. I guess if we could pick a star, 'twouldn't be, when we got it, what we thought it was. It'd be either too hot or too cold for us, or, mebbe 'twould be too big, and we'd be glad to let it go darn quick."

"But," I said timidly, "I don't want pretty dresses and things so much as I want to

read the great books and see the great people of the world."

My old friend gave a little whistle, and continued:

"Gol-darned if blood ain't thicker'n water! Well, little gal, I'm glad 'tain' nothin' worse'n books and folks ye're arter. Do ye see Bill out there? Well, when ye've seen Bill ye've seen about all there is to muledom. Bill's older and scragglier'n some on 'em, but he's a mule every inch of him, ears and all, and what's true of Bill is true of all other jackasses the world over.

"Say," he said, abruptly changing the subject, "git ye sun-bunnit and ride up to the top of the hill with me. I'll show ye somethin' worth goin' to see."

We were soon toiling over the muddy, rough road, my companion enthusiastically pointing to every evidence of Nature's spring awakening.

When we reached the highest part of the

hill, he carelessly left old Bill standing while he lifted me over the rail-fence and led me to the top of a great rock. Here, eagerly, he pointed out, with boy-like pleasure, a small patch of white anemone, the first of the year.

Grand old man! When I look back to that day and see the innocent animation beaming on his countenance, while his trembling hands put into my lap those early spring treasures, my heart swells. Am I guilty of sacrilege when involuntarily I compare this simple child-man with the so-called great men of the earth, whose faces often express an animation found in less innocent sources, and whose hands are not always unstained with the blood of their fellow men?

I made many pilgrimages to the simple home of my friends, Olive and Jason. That little cabin was no mere point in space — its vista opened to infinitude. Here were love, wisdom, reverence. The touch and spon-

taneity that I missed at my father's I found with these simple people, and very soon their gracious and soothing influences brought my mind and body back to a more normal condition.

What bearing my associations at this period had upon my later mental attitudes, I cannot say. Complex,— more complex,— most complex! But surely the secret is hidden from many who would be wise, and revealed unto babes and sucklings.

14

"We drop the golden cup at Herë's foot
And swoon back to the earth, — and find ourselves
Face down among the pine-cones, cold with dew,
While the dogs bark, and many a shepherd scoffs,
'What's come now to the youth?'"

WHEN fall came I talked with my mother about the practicability of my going to Fieldsboro' to learn the work in some dressmaking establishment. I could never face the outside world in the quaint garb I usually wore, and I must somehow find my way out into life, into the swash and the swirl. Mother fell in with my idea, but said father might object, as he generally did to all plans of the women-folk.

I finally gathered up courage and broached the matter to him. I told him I would find a place to work nights and mornings for my

board, so he consented to my going. I gathered my personal effects together into an old hair trunk with a broken lock, and waited to catch a ride to the village, eleven miles distant. An uncle from near Fieldsboro', who had been visiting friends on Quaker Hill, halted for dinner one day, and gave me my opportunity. We stood the trunk on end between the dashboard and our feet, and were soon on our way.

When we reached our destination I found myself in a land of uncles, aunts, and cousins, but I very soon felt awkward and uncomfortable. I almost despaired of further pursuing my enterprise. Everybody was busy with fall work, and I found myself thrust upon them, helpless and dependent. The aunt whose milk-pitcher I had broken, and who was at heart a sympathetic though impulsive woman, left off cleaning house and "canning" long enough to take me to town in search of a place as an apprentice. The first place at

which we applied did not want a girl so early in the season; the second had all the help needed; and the third was going to close the shop on account of lack of health. We finally found a second-class dressmaker who would take me in. We looked about some time for a place where I might work nights and mornings, and at last got comfortable quarters with a dear old lady who was suffering from cataract and needed a girl to assist.

I commenced work at once. The shop overlooked the main street that ran from the town to the Institute on the hill. Every day I was tantalized by the sight of the students passing to and fro with their books. A brilliant bevy of rosy school-girls is a pretty sight to me now, but then they were a torture to my envious heart. When I spoke modestly of my cherished hope, I was derided, and the head-dressmaker jestingly promised to make my graduating dress free of charge.

It was at this shop that I met my first congenial spirit. Helen Parker, a girl of eighteen, lived with her widowed mother in two cosy rooms rented from the dressmaker. I think we were drawn together in a musical way. Helen had a piano, — she invited me into the little home, we sang and played simple duets together, and our friendship grew into fondness. We commenced reading together, borrowing books of poems from whom we might.

When two souls, Arthur, stand on a common ground of insight and understanding, does it not always result in a feeling of kinship? It may be two men, it may be a woman and a man, it may be an old woman and a young girl, or it may be, as in this case, two young girls; but love is the result. This is the love that knows not age nor sex nor condition, for it deals with realities and its governing law is affinity. I wage no warfare against the many other emotions men label

love, but, as Fra Elbertus would say, I know some one who has tried them all and who affirms the genuineness of the genuine.

On pleasant evenings we rambled off into the meadows, I walking slowly, for Helen had been lame from her birth. Sometimes we rowed on the creek till dark, and on Sundays reached the woods a mile away. We talked over our hopes and fears, together planned to do and to be sometime — were truly soul-companions.

One evening Helen spoke of a concert to be given at the Institute, and we concluded to attend. It was the first entertainment I had ever witnessed outside of school exhibitions at home. No great artist I have ever seen has impressed me as did those girl and boy performers at Fieldsboro' Institute, that prize-concert night. The Principal's daughter, a pretty girl of my own age, sang in a clear sweet voice, "Wait till the clouds roll by," a song popular at the time. My

emotions almost overcame me. The words are still echoing within my brain:

"Oh, my Jamie, oh, my Jamie,
Bide the time a wee;
Surely lanes must have their turning
Ere the travelers dee.
Bide the time in patience, Jamie,
Looking to the sky;
Waiting like my love waits, Jamie,
Till the clouds roll by."

What a gulf there seemed between that fluffy, lacy, white-muslined Annie Raymond and myself!

How thirsty I was! I had received many rustic compliments when I sang at home and played my own half-impromptu accompaniments upon the parlor-organ. But the artist soul within me had never been touched. Expression is the normal attitude of the soul. How I longed to sing, to rest the burdened brothers and sisters of the world! Ye sordid devotees of commercialism, cast into one side

of God's great balance all the unearned increment of the money-kings of the earth, and I will tip the beam with one ideal thought — one soul-inspiration — thrown into the opposite pan. When shall society give attention to these wasted resources of humanity's wealth, and by cultivation cause the fallow fields and arid deserts of the common people to give up a full harvest for the world's soul-food?

Helen and I had a real lovers' parting at the end of the season, when she and her mother moved away; but we wrote frequently, and some of those letters I treasure still. When I read them over now, I marvel at their universal insight. One, of the early summer the year after, contains those beautiful lines from Lowell's "Vision of Sir Launfal,"— familiar enough now, but not so well known then:

"What is so rare as a day in June?
Then, if ever, come perfect days;

Then Heaven tries earth if it be in tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays: . . .
Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how;
Everything is upward striving;
'Tis as easy now for the heart to be true
As for grass to be green or skies to be blue,—
'Tis the natural way of living."

15

"Look, then, into thine heart, and write!
Yes, into life's deep stream!"

I WAS to go away to school. I was eighteen, and father had consented at last to one term in Fieldsboro' Institute. In strict truth, I felt one term away at school would revolutionize my whole mental and moral fiber. "Away at school" was a far-reaching phrase, — magic was in those brick walls that I had gazed on so often with awe and longing.

When I walked up the gravel-path, and entered the office to meet Dr. Raymond, there were traces of tears on my cheeks. Mrs. Raymond came to take me to my room, where I found another girl to share it. I was afraid my room-mate might be a "stuck-up

city girl," therefore I was glad that Emma Woodruff was a modest country product, like unto myself.

We both were bashful, but we grew tired of sitting there looking at each other; so, before the bell rang for dinner, we had told each other where we came from, had learned we were of the same age, that both had taught school, and were to study the same courses.

The bell rang. We started up, and timidly made for the dining-room. I was glad we were the first to appear on the scene, though I wondered why the others seemed so lacking in promptness. I had not learned that a boarding-school dining-room is not unlike a church in this respect: the "quality" place great value on being tardy. Indeed, in many instances, I believe tardiness is supposed to represent the only great quality of said "quality."

When we had waited some time, I vent-

ured to remark that perhaps there was a mistake. We were hesitating over the matter, when two older students entered, chatting gaily about vacation experiences, with the air of assurance characteristic of the "drummer."

In flocked more students; also the dignified faculty. All took seats at the eight tables, and dinner progressed. I had never eaten in a public place before, and it all dazzled me. I was glad of the clatter of the dishes and the confident talk of the students around me. I watched to see how others did. I was afraid to swallow for fear of choking. I thought that, in spite of myself, I was shouting at the top of my voice, "I'm from the country," and that every eye was riveted upon me. When I looked about I was surprised to see how unheeding they were. How could they be so indifferent? I was thankful when the torture of that first dinner was over and Emma and I were sitting

in our room again, looking at each other. She didn't awe me so much now, for she was countrified too, and most of the other girls, I observed, were "town-cut." I was both glad and sorry that they had put me in with country Emma.

It was not long before things began to grow familiar, and I saw that even a dignified professor might be made of very common mud, tempted in all points like myself, and not without blame.

One day a girl I had much admired said, "I did not think, that first day, I should like you, but I do." When asked her reason for doubt, she replied, "Why, I took you for one of those aristocrats."

It was compensation to find

> "They's just as skart of me
> As I was skart of them."

School-days passed quickly, and all too soon I was to go back home. Many, even

most, of the girls were to return and attend until they graduated. How I wanted to stay! In Dr. Raymond's science classes I had caught glimpses into the vastness of even the material universe, and I wanted to go on. I knew how dull and tame the farm would seem; but I must obey and go back where Nature had, eighteen years before, called me forth into objective manifestation. No books, no congenial companions, no railroad within nine miles, — nothing but disorganized household drudgery. Talk about Siberia!

I do not think all country homes are as cheerless as was my own. Indeed, I have seen comfort and happiness in snow-bound lands. It was not the isolation from civilization's centers, and the hard work, that made the place so desolate. It was the lack of love and sympathy that chilled me. I wanted just the least fraternal demonstration, with words of sympathy and encourage-

ment about my future — and this was denied me.

But the time was near when I was to hear words of love spoken in my ear — hot, passionate words, that burn, and blister, and wither.

16

"Hear our heavenly promise
Through your mortal passion!
Love ye shall have from us
In a pure relation."

WE were to have a railroad, and great excitement prevailed! Hiram Brown first brought the news from Fieldsboro'. Amos Whelpley and Frank Wilcox said they had several times noticed business-looking fellows riding about in livery rigs. Finally, it was a confirmed fact.

Silas Slocum, who owned the most unproductive piece of *terra firma* about, said he had no doubt now regarding the future prosperity of the village and the natural increase in land-values. Eph Gillett declared he was "goin' to hold on" to his farm a little longer, as he expected next they would discover oil

or coal in some of the rocky hills. My father had little to say, but looked the significant look he always wore when things were coming his way.

One winter evening, late, a tall gentleman, muffled in a fur coat, called at the door. Could he and a friend have lodging for a day or two? They were the contractors, putting through the new railroad.

They would pay well, and so they were accommodated. We spread before them plenty of wholesome farmer fare, melted the frost from the windows in the front room with a crackling wood-fire, and gave them a small bed-room adjoining, with the great soft bed of geese-feathers covered by mother's celebrated "log cabin" quilt.

The whole household was awed by the presence of these sophisticated men of the world, with their air of business and confidence. The boys carefully groomed the tired horses, and even father grew gracious and

loquacious over the ten dollars handed him the morning after their arrival. The gold on the front-room table, guarded by two revolvers, added gravity to the situation. They spent several hours that day arranging in envelopes this money intended to be given as wages to the men who were constructing the road.

Mother was fully up to the occasion, keeping her ear "cocked for coons," as Uncle Eb says. I assisted in dinner preparation, and waited on the table, very timidly. I remember I blushed when I saw the eyes of the Colonel looking at me admiringly. They were amused at my diffidence, and I arose to the dignity of my position.

When the meal was over they tried to open conversation with me.

"Who reads Shakespeare here, Miss Mabel? — not a little minx like you!"

Before I could answer, mother responded: "Yes, she does; she's always been crazy to

read and to go away to school. She's smart enough, if I do say it; but her father thinks girls don't need much book-learning."

Mother's intended compliment embarrassed me greatly. I was afraid to talk with these men, but I somehow thought I could appear at least fairly well if she would only hold her tongue. I was not quite sure what their attitude really was; I knew they must see that I was green, but I would not be foolish.

The tall Colonel came to my side, his manner and tone that which a man uses toward a woman when he first becomes interested in her.

"Miss Mabel, my friend here, Mr. Ross, is a young fellow fresh from college, and we have greatly enjoyed looking over the marked passages in your Shakespeare. If we return to-night, will you give us the pleasure of your company? We can spend the time singing and talking, and thus become better acquainted."

As he spoke, I felt as if every drop of blood in my body was suffusing my face and neck, but I answered, with the *sang-froid* of an adept, "Thank you; I shall be pleased."

Do you suppose, Arthur, the woman ever lived who could not tell exactly how I felt when mother and I were alone that afternoon, in busy preparation for the evening? We all are made of about the same mud, poke and puggle in it as we will. Mother was in her element, baking, brewing, and talking excitedly. I ventured to suggest that she give people a chance to form their own opinions. If her daughter was so very smart, they would probably find it out.

"Well," she said, "Pa and I have spent almost a hundred dollars on you, with two terms of music-lessons and going away to Fieldsboro', to say nothing of the boys; and I ain't going to have them think we can't read Shakespeare or anybody else just as well as they can."

I saw it was no use, for mother was on the war-path. The old iron tea-kettle cover gave forth a shrill metallic warning when she swung it into place.

For some reason known only to my mother, the best polka-dot linen did service that evening, and the table fairly groaned with good things. The Colonel asked to have the honor of eating with the waitress; accordingly, I was seated by his side at the table. All the delicate courtesy and attention a polished conventional man can give to an admired woman was bestowed upon my poor diffident personality. I was both gratified and embarrassed. When supper was nearly over, mother appeared upon the scene bearing a mammoth mince pie, and saying, in her blandest tone:

"I don't s'pose it's style to have pie for supper, but I want you to eat this to sample my new batch of mince-meat."

Father never let pie "go begging," and our guests both signified their willingness to

test the quality of the mince-meat; so, for the time, mother subsided with satisfaction.

We soon adjourned to the front room. I was asked to sing some old ballads, and complied, choosing "Annie Laurie" and "Sweet Afton." There was a sweet, natural pathos in my voice that appeared to please them greatly. They called for "Bonnie Doon" and "Auld Lang Syne," the Colonel enthusiastically joining in turns and snatches. The evening passed pleasantly.

Our guests prepared to leave us, the following morning, with many expressions of gratitude, saying we should surely see them again.

17

"It seems as if heaven had sent its insane angels into our world, as to an asylum, and here they will break out into their native music, and utter, at intervals, the words they have heard in Heaven. Then the mad fit returns and they mope and wallow like dogs."

CARLYLE makes Herr Teufelsdröckh call man a straddling biped without feathers. The two who had created such commotion among us had gone, but we talked of them often, telling over every little detail of that two days' association. The boys spoke of the tall, strong livery horses, in jockey parlance, as being "high-steppers" and "up on the bit." Father said it was worth all they paid to clean up the rig, robes and all, after such hard driving, adding, "I wouldn't want them to drive a horse of mine.

That off horse is knee-sprung already, and the nigh one won't be sound long."

Mother did not attempt to shine in the horse-talk, more than to say she guessed a horse more or less didn't amount to much to men who built railroads; but she dug up the Shakespearean hatchet from time to time, telling how she gave them to understand they were dealing with no low white trash when they slept in her real geese-feather bed, and ate on her best polka-dot linen.

Two weeks passed before Colonel Fuller returned, bringing with him Mr. Griswold, the civil-engineer.

"This is the little girl I have been telling you about," said the Colonel, greeting me cordially and leading me to his friend.

"So, Miss Mabel, I am told you are a student of the great dramatist, and a singer of Scotch ballads. You aren't a hypnotist also, are you? Friend Fuller seems to have bats lately, and his mind runs along

the line of Scotch ballads and poetical quotations."

Their deportment was so easy and gracious that I began to feel less uncomfortable than formerly, though I colored deeply when the conversation took a personal turn.

Supper-time gave mother the opportunity of working off much superfluous energy. I felt safe when I saw her attention focused on blackberry pickles, head cheese, and fried cakes, over against family pedigree, poetry, and philosophy. The evening was spent in general conversation. I produced my autograph album, autographs being a great fad at that time among young people. It contained many typical album verses, — such, for instance, as the following:

> "If you love me as I love you,
> No knife can cut our love in two."

At my request, both gentlemen wrote. The Colonel's words were these:

"Blessed are the pure in heart."

His companion wrote:

"*Dear Mabel:* the world has nothing brighter or dearer to give than home, sweet home, — the one you have."

Arthur, are we not all Dr. Jekylls and Mr. Hydes, in some degree? What rational being dare have other feeling for poor deluded humans, like himself, than compassion? Who are we who judge? 'Twas one wise who said, "There is none good but one, that is, God."

Do up the good and evil of the world into parcels, then label them carefully, and I will speak flippantly of what you handle. But you have told me, Arthur, that sin rests in the *motive*. I'll grow modest. I am finite, and only Infinitude has insight to grasp the secret springs of motive. Deeper still lie the mystic mazes of heredity and environment. If so-called "ruin" had come to me that night, and through all the heavy years I

had suffered even more, whom should I blame? "Leave judgment to Him who alone knows the law."

The family were preparing to retire for the night, when Colonel Fuller said to me, "Mabel, will you sit with me a moment? I have brought a little book for you, and we can look it over better together with no one to disturb us."

"A book for me?" How anxious I was to see it! and how kind he was! When we were alone, he produced a beautiful copy of Mrs. Browning's poems. I sparkled with animation a moment, and then — he had caught me in his arms, with the whisper:

"Mabel, I love you! I love you! Give yourself to me this night. Here, now, unreservedly, yield yourself. You are not afraid of me. You must, you shall! I love you so tenderly. I have money. You shall go to school — to Europe — where you will. Only be mine! mine!"

His hot breath was upon me.

And this was love — at last! Was this the thing I had wanted?

I was dazed a moment, — then shame came, and I fled from the man wildly. What a fool I had been to think he really cared for me! Doubtless they had been laughing at me all the time. Oh! horrible thought! I knew it must be so; and, for relief, I cried. My mother's blood boiled within me. They should not speak to me again, I thought. That was pride. 'Twould ruin my life, said fear. Then something said, "What would it matter? What would one have, anyway? If I could only go to school!"

My dear Arthur, the world would want me to talk here of maidenly purity and goody-goodness. But I must be truthful with you. It was later that I analyzed deep enough to recognize the real spiritual quality in acts — when I did what I thought was right for right's sake; but I claim now it was fear

and pride that held me within convention's borders that night.

A man is on his way to the gallows. The rabble are curious. Boys are shouting and deriding. So did the mob nineteen hundred years ago. Men like John Wesley stand with uncovered heads, and say, in reverent tones: "Except for the grace of God, there goes John Wesley."

18

"Unless you can think, when the song is done,
No other is soft in the rhythm;
Unless you can fear, when left by one,
That everything else goes with him;
Unless you can know, when unpraised by his breath,
That your beauty itself wants proving;
Unless you can swear 'For life — for death!'
Oh, fear to call it loving."

NATURALLY, I was embarrassed when I met the Colonel the next morning. He also was ill at ease when he greeted me. His manner was no longer genial, but business-like and serious.

I was glad that mother kept me busy assisting with the work in the pantry; for, the day being cold and stormy, no one ventured forth.

I was peeling apples for mother's pies

when, taking advantage of her absence, Colonel Fuller appeared in the doorway.

"Mabel, I am afraid to approach you after last night's scene; but I can't wait longer to ask your forgiveness. Give me another trial, and I will never abuse your confidence again."

Mother appeared before I could answer.

"My good woman," he said, laying his hand upon mother's arm, "will you trust me with your daughter? I esteem her most highly, and may all the fiends of Hades combine against me if I bring her to harm."

Tears sprang to his eyes. We both knew the man's better nature spoke truthfully. Mother herself was quite subdued.

"I have always taught my children to do right, and I ain't afraid to trust either one of you," she said.

Colonel Fuller was a changed man from the moment. I talked with him. I read

and sang with him. I rode out alone with him. I believed, as he declared, that a higher and better love had taken in him the place of the passionate infatuation which often, for many, brings sorrow.

We think *we* know, Arthur, something about the Saint Paul love, which seeketh not its own, vaunteth not itself, doth not behave itself unseemly. The spurious article often resembles the genuine so closely that it takes a connoisseur to discern the difference. It has been said, "Love and lie, your love is curable." One might add: Love, and seek your own gratification at the expense of the object loved, — your love is *very* curable.

Colonel Fuller gave me many moments of pleasure that winter, and it was with sincere regret that, at the completion of the railroad, we finally parted. It was his wish that I give up school, and give myself into his keeping for life; but I could not bring myself to

love the man better than I loved my great hope, and so we parted.

"Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing,
Only a signal shown, and a distant voice in the darkness."

19

"Nothing's small — no lily-muffled hum of summer bee
But finds some coupling with the shining stars."

ANOTHER term of school-teaching, and another term at Fieldsboro', brought me home again for the winter. Books were growing to be more a feature in the home life, — father still distrustful of "made up stuff," but offering no serious objection.

We had a literary society, and several weeks of protracted or "revival" meetings, during the winter months. The latter were conducted by ignorant, if earnest, country preachers or exhorters, and usually resulted in more harm than help to the community.

The literary society was typical in character, and furnished much amusement for the country people around about. Rustics old

and young took part with marked solemnity in debating questions of large import. I recall some of the debates distinctly:

"*Question:* Resolved, that Webster was a greater man than Napoleon."

"*Question:* Resolved, that fire has done more damage than water."

"*Question:* Resolved, that woman has a harder life than man."

Just what was meant by "harder," in the last instance, is in doubt. However, I have a ticket for next Saturday's Grand Opera which I would be glad to exchange for an opportunity of being present again at one of those old literary-society debates.

A marked feature of the gatherings was the "literary paper," prepared and read weekly, containing personal mention, scraps of original poetry, and so forth.

Our local school had now grown to some proportions. A new school building had been erected, and three teachers were employed

instead of one. The "principal," as he was called, was quite a personage among the people, especially among the girl element. We were to have a new principal, and the gossips were busy. There was talk of "prodigality," and of an "unfinished college course." But the world rolled on, making history, — big events, — little events, — all history.

The man came, and I met him.

Some one asks, If the dog had barked that Elizabeth Barrett carried in her arms the day when she eloped with her soul's mate, what would have been the effect upon English literature? I hold in my hand a gladiolus bulb, — a rough, unsightly thing; yet all the potentialities of its marvelous future evolution are here, — roots, stems, leaves, flowers.

I think a thought, and the sensitive blood is tell-tale in my suffused or pallid face. Scientists tell of a man killed by a thought;

and yet a million thoughts do not crowd the area of a needle's point.

When I called at the post-office for the mail one day, I found Emma Stone, an old schoolmate, who had come to spend a week at home.

"We ought to visit the school, and meet the new teacher," she said, as I was leaving; and so arrangements were made.

There were three of us, including Effie Chandler, gathered in the school-house entry. Confident Emma Stone raps, and, when the principal responds, she asks for Lizzie Davis, one of the largest girls. Lizzie comes out, we whisper and simper a moment, as girls do sometimes, and then march in proudly, with very self-conscious decorum.

We were seated with Lizzie, on the back seat. The classes filed out for recitation.

"Katy, you may bound France, and give its capital."

Katy, having been selected as the brightest

girl in the class, bounds very glibly the land of fashions:

"France is bounded on the north by the English channel, on the west by the Atlantic ocean, on the south by Spain and the Mediterranean sea, and on the east by Germany, Italy, and Belgium. The capital is Paris, on the Seine."

"Very good," says the teacher. "John, you may bound Spain, and give its capital."

John "bounds" rather awkwardly, being usually more dull, at the same age, than his girl-classmate.

"Spain is bounded on the north by the Bay of Biscay and France; on the west by the Atlantic ocean and Portugal; on the south by the Atlantic ocean and the Mediterranean sea; on the east by the Mediterranean sea."

John blushes deeply — he cannot remember the capital. Up come half-a-dozen hands of rivals, who hope to "show off."

"Class, what is it?" says the teacher.

"Madrid!" answers a chorus of voices.

The teacher goes on through the dull routine of teaching the young idea how to shoot, which, at that time, meant stuffing all you could into the mind without an attempt to draw anything out.

Froebel, grand old man! What a race-benefactor! And still, Arthur, we give to such pioneers as he a dinner of husks and a bed of straw, — so busy are we feeding and "sleeping" a few hundred epicurean parasites.

"Desks in order!" says the tired teacher; and a rattle and scramble ensue to bring order out of chaos.

"Arms folded" — a death-like hush falls over the room, broken only by a "hem!" or "haw!" from some pert pupil.

"School stand, — excused." And out file two score or more of America's future fathers, mothers, lawyers, doctors, farmers,

teachers, robbers, preachers, artists, builders, workers, — men, women.

If you have a trotter, you visit the stable often, feel of its limbs, ask of its yesterday's record, have an eye on the trainer. If you have a child, don't visit the teacher, don't look to its record, or care if its environment be wholesome. Why should you! It is only a child, and its name isn't down on the stock-book.

School over, we are duly introduced to the principal. We talk of schools in general and of this one in particular. When parting-time comes, we find refuge in perfunctory remarks:

"I have enjoyed my call very much."

"Thank you, I shall be pleased to see you again."

"My brother is home now, and we shall be glad to have you call."

"Thank you, I shall do so with pleasure."

"Good afternoon."

"Good afternoon."

How indifferently, Arthur, I walked home that night, "cross lots," in the snow-path of my junior brother, who attended the school. How could I know that there were years of association before me with this quiet man of the school-room? — years when I helped him with a strength no other could give, then years of my own weakness, when he stood by my side and repaid me; — years when both body and soul were struggling for poise in existence.

20

"No, by Allah! she believed in me when none else would believe."

THE principal called within a week,—called frequently. Two months passed thus, and then he told me the old, old story that Drummond says began with the elective affinity of two differing cells.

We had been reading "The Dream of the Hunter," when he took my hand, saying seriously:

"Why did I not meet you before? Mabel, I love you!"

Then followed confessions, even as Angel Clare confessed to Tess, of what had been but should not be again. Isn't this the impulse, Arthur, which every honest man feels, coming before the woman he loves, knowing her purity,

and regretting a past that makes him not quite her equal? True love would give even more than it receives. Young men do not think of these things when they form some unholy alliance. Later, when the real love-touch comes, the scales drop from their eyes.

"'Twas all so unsatisfactory. But, little sister," he continued, "I can amend and achieve, since I have this great love to help me."

I answered quickly, "I took you for my brother from the first. I trust you. Just bring me results, while I work out my own."

I resumed my studies at once, and my friend left for a western city. The parting word was:

"All things come to those who wait."

"And work," he added, smiling.

21

"Our spirits have climbed high
By reason of the passion of our grief,
And from the top of sense looked over sense,
To the significance and heart of all things,
Rather than things themselves."

I HAD met a widow, a literary character of Fieldsboro', who, needing companionship, had made me the gracious offer of rooming in her home without charge. Nine terms were required for "graduation." I had attended two. I interested father in the situation. The small expense necessary recommended itself to his practical mind, and, with little opposition, I won my case.

To be sure, girls didn't need much education, but if I could make it inexpensive 'twas at least no harm.

"Well, go ahead," he said. "I suppose

you'll never be contented till you reach the end of the rope."

To do my father justice, I must say that he greatly rejoiced in each and every one of my successes. But they were being purchased at the price of blood, though no one knew it but myself.

Foolish girl! I had dreamed of standing some day on the very topmost round of the ladder of knowledge, and here was Commencement Day, at the Seminary, finding me dizzy on the first round.

It was a pale, tired girl who walked to the footlights that night to read her graduating essay, entitled "The Glamour of Fiction." Even yet I recall the closing words:

"The world will be cold indeed if it does not reckon among its great ones such martyrs as missed the palm but not the pains of martyrdom. Heroes without laurels, and victors without the jubilation of triumph."

I remember, too, how the white ribbon that decorated my soft mull dress trembled with each heart-throb, as if it also had felt the strain and was asking for rest.

It was the June time, and Cousin Carrie had come again for a vacation among the country friends. I saw her fine, classic face smiling at me in that strange Commencement throng, but tears were sparkling in her eyes. She, among all before me, knew my thought that day. No word had passed between us, but her nature was intuitive, and she remembered my words. The struggle, the cost, — she felt it all.

There was something akin to sorrow with me that day —

"A something too vague, could I name it, for others to know."

Deep-sounding thought-currents were surging through the brain-substance of one "sweet girl-graduate," as she quietly sat there, so

worn at twenty, overlooking the crowded chapel. An ex-governor, with other dignitaries, was seated on the platform; but they all seemed pygmies; — men, great men, schools, cities, nations; — the earth itself only God's footstool. I could easily toss it into space!

As a little girl, I had thought to gain knowledge in some of the schools men had reared on this little ball, one-fourth land and three-fourths water. I gathered up my books and flowers and went forward to receive congratulations among the rest; but I felt, Arthur, as Lyndall did, and as all must feel sometime: I didn't want schools, nor men, nor the things men work for; I just wanted something great and good and pure to lift me to itself.

22

"But who could have expected this,
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss?

"So earth has gained by one man more,
And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain, too,
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er,
When autumn comes; which I mean to do
One day, as I said before."

MY father, quite as ignorant as myself, expected great things of me now, and I must go out and contend — offer my mental wares in the world's great marts. I must squeeze my drop of juice from the World Orange. Out there a million hands were squeezing frantically — a million mouths were sucking eagerly.

Arthur, can you understand how I changed

from girl to woman during those next two years, learning what competition — unequal competition — means? These human animals were not satisfied when appetites were satiated; but I could see them, surfeiting and drunken with earth's choicest elixirs, push back even baby mouths that pressed rich Nature's juice-expanded sides — the World Orange meant for all — to get their share of sap.

My friend had entered upon the study of medicine poor, and I learned to realize more and more the struggle he was making, away in that distant city. Handclasps by letter, and encouraging words, passed between us often.

Only once did I feel that a brave soul, through stress and strain, was halting:

"Mabel," he wrote, "you are the only one who can help me; but I must not be selfish. My most blessed thought is that, if I fail, I leave you free and pure as when I found you."

It was an April day when he came back, handing me the bit of parchment that meant so little and yet so much to him.

"It is yours, Mabel," he said; "I never could have gone through without friends or wealth, had it not been for you."

When we were alone he spoke of victories quite as important, to my mind, as taking the highest honors in his class:

"I have done what I could to amend and achieve," he said. "I am more than repaid, little sister, even should I miss the crowning joy."

A week we wandered about the old familiar haunts of the farm, often lingering in a sunny, quiet corner with a book, and living again among old friends. Too soon he turned and said to me, in his simple, earnest way:

"Little comrade, I must leave you soon. Do we not need each other?"

A moment I waited before I ventured:

L. OF C.

"You always understand. Yes, I think we need each other."

A long time we sat there on the old rock in the orchard, where, when a little girl, I had played "Come visiting" with the children.

We were subdued in our happiness. We made our plans, talking, with the beauty of perfect frankness, of the home to be, of the need of economy, and of other and more sacred themes.

"Oh, Mabel, God's universe must be good. This love teaches me as much."

Words were not necessary longer. Each felt that the other understood. The hour was full of prayer. It was quite dark when he broke the silence:

"Could a man ever descend again, after an hour like this? I see it all!"

23

"The future stands
Before me, like a wall of adamant
I cannot climb."

I NEVER see a poor young "Med." but my heart swells with pity. Current "exams." and all are but a glimmering foretaste of trials yet to be. Medical men on every corner, — yet he must "locate." He "locates," and the battle is on. Then he waits for that first case that might come stealing in on him at any moment.

Why doesn't the telephone ring? It looks at him mockingly. Nobody thinks of the telephone except the man who sends in the bill for the quarter's service. If he has a wife, he can leave the poor thing to watch, while he bustles off hoping to give the impression of urgent business. He isn't guilty,

but he comes to feel cheap and shame-faced. He sees the older physicians go hurrying past with the imposing air of responsibility.

Somebody has a sick baby. All the neighboring mothers are in consultation.

"Mercy!" says one, — "don't send for that young doctor; what does he know about babies?"

A lady is in need of medical advice. Her husband says:

"The older physicians don't seem to hit your case; why not try that new man?"

"Oh! goodness sakes! you don't suppose I'm going to have that green fellow, do you?"

When the older practitioners are all "out," if some one happens to break a leg, or a child falls out of a second-story window, they will be glad of the new man! He can also count on all the "dead beats."

Thus in time he will get before the people, if he has patience to wait for patients.

24

"'First, God's love.'
'And next,' he smiled, 'the love of wedded souls.'"

IN June the man of God said the conventional words over us, and we launched our ship on the matrimonial sea. We were to "locate" in a country town of Pennsylvania, with ten dollars in pocket, a horse and carriage, eight or ten medical books, some simple doctor's apparatus, and $1000 in college debts — the biggest thing we carried.

We found three rooms with an old couple, on Main street, and hung up a modest sign. One room must be given up for the office; the other large room did service as kitchen, dining-room, and parlor.

Callers, not patients, came early, as they always do in country places. Sumptuous

young women, and be-silked, be-frizzled, and bonneted matronly dames. They were curious, I suppose, to see the new doctor and his wife. I grew to know just how the chat would run, and had my answers all ready.

"How do you like our little village?"

"Does your husband get much to do, yet?"

"Oh yes, there's sights of sickness in town."

"They say Dr. Johnson is busy night and day."

"What church do you attend? Oh, not a member? We should be pleased to have you make your church home with us"—and they mentioned one or other of the hundred and fifty odd Christian sects, as the case might be.

I was usually glad when the ordeal was over, for its perfunctoriness was a trial to one of my natural spontaneity.

How well I remember the first real profes-

sional call! It came in the night. A messenger in haste said breathlessly:

"This the doctor? Come to Mr. Brayton's, opposite the Presbyterian church, quick!"

In the excitement that followed I dropped the watch from the doctor's vest which I was holding ready, and broke the crystal.

He finally departed in safety. If you think, Arthur, that I rested, those two hours of his absence, you have never been the assistant of a young physician and helped him attend his first case!

Selfish, wicked girl! My first question, on his return, was not as to the welfare of the poor patient, but, "Do you think they liked you?"

This brought a smile.

"Well, I really cannot say, dear; but the poor man is better," he answered cheerfully.

I cannot leave this part of my story with-

out mention of dear old Aunt Sarah Silvering. She had married a prosperous widower, who had four children whom she mothered and sent out of the home nest before her own little Sadie came. Aunt Sarah was a new edition of Samantha Allen, printed in italics. When her husband lost his property by "signing" with the boys, and became an invalid on her hands, she bought a pony and phaeton, and scoured the country up and down selling bosom-boards to maintain the family.

Dear old heart! I can see her now, as she came puffing up the back lane that hot summer afternoon to call upon the new doctor and his wife. She wore her usual afternoon white apron, and carried, besides her two hundred pounds avoirdupois, an elderberry pie in one hand, and in the other a mammoth sun-umbrella. I was sitting on the front porch when she turned in at the gate, perspiration standing in drops on her smiling

old face. Her first words made me feel at home:

"I'm Aunt Sarah Silvering. I baked pies this morning and thought mebbe you'd like to try one. Well, how d'ye do, anyway?" she said, taking the seat I offered, as with thanks I relieved her of the fat, juicy dyspepsia-producer.

"Bless me, but it's hot! Guess I hain't cooled off yet from baking," she panted.

I brought forth a huge "Jap" fan, which she waved vigorously while she continued:

"Does things seem to be home-like to ye, yet? When I married Pap we went to Glenville to live. I thought I never'd get used to folks and things there, but I did, and it'll be just the same with you."

I told her I found the place delightful and hoped to enjoy my new home very much.

"Well," said Aunt Sarah, "there's two women I always pity, — it's the doctor's wife and the minister's wife. But don't ye ever

get discouraged. The doctors here are gettin' old, and we need some new ones. Mr. Brayton's folks liked your man splendid."

I said, calmly, I was very glad to hear it, but my heart was bounding for joy.

"Ye'll hear lots of things to hurt ye, so I'm goin' to tell ye about our son Jim. He owns one of the biggest houses in Jonesboro' now, and has all he can do, but he had up-hill work starting. One day I was goin' over in the 'bus to see 'em, soon after they settled. I heard two women talkin' 'bout someone who was sick. One said, 'Well, he'll die sure now, for they've gone and got that green doctor, Jim Silvering. Why, he don't amount to a hill of beans. Sam used to know his father when Jim was a boy, and they lived down on the plank road.'"

We both laughed pleasantly, and, after visiting a few moments longer, Aunt Sarah said she must be going back or Pap would miss her.

"We've got a garden full of stuff. Come and see us. Bring a basket and get anything you want," she said, as she joggled off down the back lane.

An hour later, when the doctor came in from the drug-store, I burst out joyfully:

"Oh, Aunt Sarah Silvering has been here. She said they did like you up at Mr. Brayton's. After we pay all the debts, we'll buy a place of our own, and have a garden and flowers and everything nice, won't we, dear!"

25

"Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him? but the thunder of His power who can understand?"

THERE were five churches in this village, and Churchanity was rampant. There were splits and cliques galore, each jealous and trying to outdo all the others. Every desirable newcomer was pounced upon as soon as discovered by these church vandals. Young and ignorant, I was early seized upon as new plunder. I sang, read, wrote, trained children for entertainments, worked for the heathen, ate church oyster-stews, was feasted and fasted. They seemed to regard me as public property, and I tried to fill the bill. Nevertheless, we were very happy.

The economy I was obliged to practice grew interesting. 'Twas like a game, — seeing how far a dollar would go, and trying to create something out of nothing. Colonel Ingersoll said that "nothing" is pretty poor material out of which to construct a universe. How do we know? Things are not always what they appear on the surface. Perhaps the enthusiasm I experienced over my tasteful little dishes, made from next to nothing, was the very God-feeling itself, which finds satisfaction and reward in ever working for betterment, bringing order out of chaos and harmony out of discord.

We were in a beautiful country. The river-like creek spread its lazy length along the valley, where fertile farms lay, like upturned faces, waiting to be kissed into fullness by the sun and rain.

There were rolling hills farther back, and quiet wooded drives — welcome in the heated days of summer. How we did enjoy those

rides together! for we would take that much of our inheritance out of the strenuous about us, and often stole away, on business or otherwise, leaving only a note on the office door.

I recall most interesting rides later, in the night-time, when I chose to ride and hold horse rather than wait alone and listen for burglars.

One of these rides, I distinctly remember, came late in the evening, after a heaven rain. There was that delicious odor and coolness over everything, which comes after a feverish summer day has been bathed and refreshed by a thorough thunderstorm. To the home of the patient, Mr. Allen, was a distance of nearly four miles. Half the way lay through beautiful open woods. The moonlight was resting soft and shadowy on every object, glinting and sparkling from the little pools of water that stood in the road.

Infinitude was with us that night. We

left off dusting the "flaunty carpets of the world," and spoke to each other as two souls may, riding away in the moonlight and shadows and silence.

"This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good."

"My God, my God, let me for once look on thee
As though naught else existed, — we alone!"

26

"Men and women, Gods in embryo."

MY neighbors grew interesting to me as I became better acquainted. Each had his or her own peculiar individuality and setting. The old couple from whom we rented our simple quarters were exceedingly kind and considerate. I soon learned that everybody in the town, after reaching middle life, was known as "Aunt" or "Uncle" So-and-so. Aunt Esther and Uncle Henry were true penny-pinching Yankees. They had retired from their large farm to this village home, where they raised their own vegetables and kept chickens.

Aunt Esther was decidedly the head of the household, and, though Uncle Henry put in a counter claim at odd times and places,

he was quickly "squelched" by his partner of fifty-five years.

Uncle Henry had not retained the full vigorous play of faculties, as had Aunt Esther, but had relapsed into that semi-boyishness sometimes seen in aged men. He doted much upon a harmless affiliation with the opposite sex, or "females," as he was pleased to call them.

We were scarcely settled in our rooms before the dear old man took it upon himself to entertain the new doctor and wife. Especially he sought to look after the needs of the young "female" wife. Aunt Esther seemed to think the young people would prefer to look after themselves. Uncle Henry would hardly drop his tall spare form into the chair I offered, when Aunt Esther, coming from the garden, would call out sharply:

"Henry, I want some wood split."

Uncle Henry would cease smoothing his Puritanical locks, and hobble out, saying:

"Mother, there's heaps of wood split, — I want to talk to the doctor's wife a minute."

Aunt Esther would have no mercy, but under her breath would say, "You old goose, she don't want to hear your clack! Talk to me if you've got to talk."

Occasionally Aunt Esther would don her best black merino dress, black fringe shawl, and poke bonnet, for a day or two of outing at the farm, among old neighbors. When she was fairly out of sight, Uncle Henry would breathe a sigh of relief, and begin high carnival, visiting among the people and enjoying himself generally until her return.

Upon a certain evening of Aunt Esther's absence, he called to me anxiously as I was passing the kitchen door:

"Beats Sam Hill what's become of that loaf of bread. I had it sure this noon. Mother keeps it in a jar under the shelf," he said as I entered the kitchen and instituted a diligent search for the lost loaf.

The bread-crock being empty, I lifted the cover from a neighboring crock, containing Aunt Esther's soft soap, and saw the tip of the staff of life heaving above the contents. It was a sorry-looking loaf that I drew forth for Uncle Henry's repast.

"Yer wouldn't know it from a side of sole leather," he said ruefully; but I mended the matter by taking him to my own table.

"Don't tell mother a tarnal word about that bread," he artfully suggested.

When many weeks had passed, and I knew distance made Uncle Henry safe, I told Aunt Esther about the bread disaster.

"The old fool!" was all she said.

There was busy Mrs. Strong, her husband, and two little girls, who lived next door. Mrs. Strong was one of those elastic individuals who never seem to require rest. She took boarders, did dressmaking (keeping two apprentice-girls busy), sang in one of the

village choirs, took music-lessons, "kept house spick and span," dressed her little girls like fairies, still having time and energy left to keep an eye on a sporty and perverse husband. Though this woman, it was said, supported the house, she was always ready to entertain callers, and was always in good humor, — better humor, perhaps, than her nearest neighbors, who listened to her vocal and instrumental practice through the open windows of mid-summer after eleven o'clock at night.

Nearly opposite, we had bustling widow Snyder, with a family of seven children. She had wakened one morning, years before, and found her husband in a semi-unconscious state from which he never rallied. With a small insurance-money she bought a little home, — devising ways and means to keep her brood together, until they were now nearly all grown out of helplessness into helpfulness. All this, and more, the good

woman told to every stranger, just as she told it to me one morning when she came over, voluntarily offering to assist me in putting up my first basket of pears, which Aunt Esther had brought in from the farm.

"My, I shall never forget how I felt," said Mrs. Snyder, "when I put my hand over on Sile and found him cold!

"We never got along very well," she continued, "though Sile was sober and worked all the time. 'It's a poor man for children, and a rich man for luck,'" she went on, "and land knows the sayin' 's true enough in our case."

The spoon moved vigorously around the boiling pears in the porcelain kettle, and the widow said with a sigh:

"Well, I told Sile we'd have all the children the good Lord sent, and I've never been sorry that I did."

She stopped a moment to fan herself with

her checked gingham apron, then broke forth anew:

"Some folks thinks the Lord don't have nothin' to do with these things, but I guess they'll find out different sometime."

By twelve o'clock we had nearly covered the kitchen table with pears in every conceivable form — canned, preserved, and pickled.

"Just call over, whenever you want any help," said the widow. "I can come as well as not; Grace and Stella are big enough to do all the work," and off bustled the little woman, who, with all her simpleness, had kept seven children housed, fed, and clothed for nine long years.

We early made the acquaintance of grandma and grandpa Goulding. Aunt Sarah Silvering knew grandma's weakness for doctors and medicine, and she told her she ought to try the new doctor; that Pap was all taken up with him. Accordingly, grandpa hobbled

up after the doctor the next time grandma had a "spell."

These old people from that time on became a firm fixture in our environment. Grandma said to the doctor, "Send your woman down to see me," and aunt Sarah said I must go or grandma would be offended, so I went.

It was certainly amusing to observe this old couple. They were, in points, like my own grand-folk, only in this case the talk and exaggeration rested with grandma, while grandpa acted as pigeon-stool and general reference-committee. Outside of her pet subject — her ills and her medicine — grandma loved best to dwell in conversation upon her "millionaire brother, B. E. Roberts," a soap-dealer of New York, and on the old family cat Tabby.

When I would enter the house, grandma would first recount her aches and pains; if in bed she would shrink away into the pillows

and look the very personification of aged despair. After the usual words of sympathy, it was policy to mention either the cat or her brother, when, lo! what a change! Grandma was a new woman. She had really a handsome New England face, and a straight supple body for a woman of advanced age. She would struggle not to make the transition too abrupt from death's door back to the normal, but usually with futile attempt.

"Oh, Tabby! My, yes! you never seen the likes of her!"

By this time her old face was beaming.

"Father knows 'bout how she goes to the cupboard, crosses her paws, and says 'Meow,' every time she wants a cold potato."

Grandpa's wizened old face would respond with animation, while he chewed away vigorously on his little pinch of tobacco, never venturing a word unless grandma turned to him for substantiation.

Much the same scene would be enacted

when mention was made of her wealthy brother.

"Ben? Oh, yes! my sakes, he hain't no prouder 'n you be."

Then she would tell of her visit to New York, and go into every detail, describing even the large Percheron horses that drew the famous soap-products of the prosperous Ben.

"And Ben, — my, yes! His girls want new-fangled things, but Ben always has 'biled' dinners, Sundays — he says biled dinner 's good enough for him."

Many pleasant calls I had at the home of grandma and grandpa Goulding.

27

"Let one more attest,
I have lived, seen God's hand through a life-time, and all was for best."

WHEN autumn came we took more commodious quarters. A new experience was before us, and we spoke to each other, even as John Halifax did to Phineas, with blissful awe.

A little sail was coming out of the Unknown to voyage with us in the present Known. 'Twas said of one, "The mother's rapture slew her." Such happy ending I was denied.

My strength was passing — a day of reckoning was at hand for overdrawn checks on vitality. The crisis came, and I lay me down prostrate and broken. Days, weeks, I hovered,

a second time at the dim border; then with gentlest nursing and tenderest care they brought me back to life, but not to health.

Slowly the fact dawned that I was doomed to invalidism for many years, perhaps for life. How bitter grew the days! How unjust it all seemed! So young, so happy we had been; I could not understand. I will endure all pain, poverty, or disappointment, I cried, only this one bliss I can't surrender. Does God make motherhood to mock it? There is no God! The universe is indeed a charnel-house where fiends hold revel.

I was not the first child to rebel against the discipline of the higher grade.

> "Alas, long-suffering and most patient God,
> Thou need'st be surelier God to bear with us
> Than ever to have made us."

Arthur, I had never been called stupid in the seminary days, but I took long time learning my lesson in the higher school. The

light commenced to break first when I went out to succor others, forgetful of my heart-wounds. Even a feeble hand could carry a cup of cold water and touch gently.

Burdened and distressed, disappointed and childless, even so much as this can be hidden away in the grateful smile of those you relieve. Strange mission of pain! In the presence of others' sorrow our own woes reach their minimum. What else is it but this that makes us linger enrapt before the great pictures of Christ agonizing in the garden or on the cross?

What is it but this that shall revolutionize society and at last make all men brothers?

Happiness—blessedness—came once more.

28

"Put roses in their hair, put precious stones on their breast, see that they be arrayed in purple and scarlet, with other delights; that they also learn to read the gilded heraldry of the sky, and upon earth be taught — not only the labor, but the loveliness."

I WAS going back to visit and rest at the old farm home. Three years had passed since I rode away, that spring morning. Varied thoughts and emotions came to me as I drew near the old associations. Over the railroad-bed, where I was riding, I had ridden with Colonel Fuller, when the road was in process of construction seven years before.

Places and farms I had known looked at me familiarly, like old friends. My sister met me at the station, and a mile drive brought us to the little huddle of houses anciently known as "The Berg."

It seemed as if the fixed characters I saw sitting on the steps of the grocery, and just beyond at the post-office, must have remained faithful at their posts during my three years' absence. Hiram Brown, the tall, gaunt mangossip of the place, was whittling what appeared to be the same stick which he had held the day I left. And there were Amos Whelpley and Frank Wilcox, sitting on their old perches — talking cracker-barrel politics and philosophy.

Passing the old blacksmith-shop, I caught a glimpse of the ruddy face of Patrick Murphy, illuminated by the forge fire, and saw his brawny arm in uprolled sleeve, ringing anvil music, the hot iron responding in its torture by giving out brilliant spark-showers. As a child I had seen only the beautiful sparks, — the result. Now I saw these and more, — the fiery furnace; heard the cry of anguish under the hammer; recognized the means to an end.

A call at the post-office for the mail, and then the old farm was before me again. The windows with their blue oil-cloth shades, and green blinds swung wide apart, seemed like great sphynx-eyes looking out, expressionless and solemn.

Before we reached the horse-block, where the milk-can stood a faithful sentinel, mother was out, laughing and crying all in the same breath.

"Oh dear, you've caught us just before we got things into place," she said as we reached the front door of the great farm kitchen, where Susan Green, of pyramid-cake renown, stood red and perspiring over the old elevated oven-stove.

"Things are a little upset," said Susan, "but what muss there is you see right in the middle of the floor — the corners are all clean and there's plenty to eat."

In the big "spare room" another neighboring woman was hanging up the old family

portraits, mottoes, and chromos, the usual wall decorations of the ordinary farmhouse.

It was characteristic of my mother to get out full force, and clean house from cellar to garret whenever company was in prospect. She could not let me rest till I had taken a journey to the pantry.

"There!" she said, "I am going to see if we can't get some color into your face."

Pies, cakes, and other good things loomed up on every side; but the milk-rack, full of great pans of cream-covered milk, I remarked looked most tempting.

"Well, Susan," said my mother, "bring this child a bowl of bread and milk; she can sit down and start on that while the ham and dandelion-greens cook for dinner."

Susan soon appeared bearing a bowl filled with the richest cream.

"Now, that's what we call bread and milk," said mother with satisfaction. "No wonder you look sick; I should die if I

had to live on milk-and-water and baker's stuff."

To go over every nook and corner of the house and farm, and find nothing changed, had a certain impressiveness. The wood sink, in the woodshed, where I had washed dishes, pots, pans, pails, and cans to my heart's content in my girlhood days, looked at me fraternally.

Farther on, in the corner, stood the tool-box, with hoes hanging above, and axes and saws arranged in order on the wall close by.

In the back yard grew clumps of burdock, horseradish, and comfrey, in their old haunts.

The flower-garden had always been a source of delight and satisfaction. The beds were losing shape by neglect, but the collection was a marvel in variety. Blackeyed-susans coquetted with sweet-williams over the bleeding hearts that drooped suggestively between! Polyanthus, petunias, bachelor's-

buttons, and everlastings were there in glory and profusion.

My mother seemed so well and happy, I little thought when I left, at the end of a two weeks' visit, I should never see her about the old home again. To me was not given the vision of the angel in Tolstoy's story, "What Men Live By."

That same year, mother came to my home in failing health. During the four months we had her with us, she grew patient and serene as I had never known her to be in the hurried working-days. The something I had missed, when a child, I found now in this quiet, resting mother. Just to hear her say, "My child," was peace and contentment.

Poor tired fathers and mothers! Poor tired brothers and sisters! Poor tired humanity! How little we know of the dormant sweetness in every soul! The real essence of true culture was with my mother — even an artistic nature and a sympathetic heart.

Better are these qualities than any conventional virtue or veneer.

In the late autumn the summons came for which she had long waited, and mother's working, care-distracted days were over.

Shall men forever allow these life-tragedies to be enacted, and go on unheeding until the work of forming falls from out their hands? Dark ages have their lessons. O People, build more wisely — watch the Master-builder!

29

"But if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."

NOT long ago, Arthur, I listened to a sermon which pleased and helped me much. The minister, a hale, hearty man of years had been "retired." The things he said came forth with the genuine ring — simple, spontaneous. His text was:

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

When a child, his father had sent him — basket in hand — to the woods, nut-gathering. When he came back with the basket well

filled, the boy felt like Napoleon at Austerlitz: when he returned with it empty, he felt like Napoleon at Waterloo. His father's greeting was always the same — always gentle, be the basket full or empty. At this the boy marveled. Later, he learned the doctors had feared tuberculosis, and that his father had sent him out on those New Hampshire mountain-sides to bring back — health. The frail lad had thought his father wanted him to bring back hickory-nuts. The tragedy of life is its hickory-nut story.

Ruskin illustrates the situation very aptly by telling of a suggestive dream he had once upon a time. He was attending a child's May-day party, where everything had been provided for the comfort and amusement of the children — beautiful and interesting gardens, games, books, and toys. But in the midst of their joyousness it occurred to some of the more "practical" children that they would like some of the brass-headed nails

that studded the chairs. Soon all the children were busy spraining their fingers trying to pull out brass nails. Excitement ran high. Tables were overturned and beautiful pictures were demolished in the mad scramble. Here and there one of the children tried to creep away with a book, but, as a rule, tumult prevailed. One would shout, — "How many nails have you? I have five." Response — "Goodness! I have fifty!" And so they pursued their "happiness," though each well knew he should not be allowed to take away at night so much as one single brass knob.

Arthur, how often we have talked these matters over, heart to heart, even soul to soul! Sometimes we have been moved by the ludicrousness of it all, but the pathos touched us most. We thought we saw, in manifestation, three attributes of the entity we call God: Love, Wisdom, Power. Love, because we have in finite what the Over-soul

has in infinite; a stream cannot rise higher than its source. Wisdom and Power are self-evident in order and operation. From the sacred love-home which we have found each for each in the heart of the other, we reach out fondly, compassionately, to a universe filled with our kind. The constant ebb and flow of the all-pervading essence of life makes kindred of men and mountains, twinkling night star, and echoing thunder. Breathing deeply and broadening out, we touch at times the outermost rim of the circle that has no circumference. Labels and limits gradually vanish into nothingness. We love as we would be loved, and forgive as we would be forgiven. Thus, with labor and loyalty, the days do grow most tuneful!

How easily can the wise power of love measure and settle all relations! Not blind, insane, selfish love, but love that sees and gives itself in sanity! To me, this love *we* bear each other, Arthur, is most beautiful,

most sacred, blending all the various elements of father, mother, sister, brother, friend, lover love.

Listen, angels, —"Truth's no cleaner thing than love."

30

"O poet, O my love,
Since I was too ambitious in my deed,
And thought to distance all men in success,
Till God came on me, marked the place and said,
'Ill-doer, henceforth keep within this line,
Attempting less than others,' — and I stand
And work among Christ's little ones, content."

THOSE were dark days, Arthur, following my mother's death — dragging, dreary times. Dire thoughts chased through my brain — hollow, transient. If one could only sleep, and never waken more with that returning conscious shudder! For the sake of those who loved me I waited on — feeble in body, heart-sick, and with soul out of tune. I had missed my bearings, lost my way in the darkness; but, out of agonizing shadows and Gethsemane valleys, burst

resurrection mornings, with rolled-back stones and Easter blooms.

Only those lives need be barren that are lived for self. Words of love and looks of gratitude from sufferers are children that never break the hearts of those who brought them forth. When smiles sent daggers to my heart and happy faces mocked me with their joy, 'twas work and sacrifice that saved me whole. Take no one's word: just do the thing that calls for these, then tell me if great Nature does not compensate! The old, the sick, the forsaken were sought out. Classes for simple self-help were organized among the factory children, and life that had hung around my neck like a millstone changed into a jewel bright — light shone on it.

Many of these children I found quick to learn, and almost all were eager and hungry for knowledge.

I must tell you of little Bessie, a dear child of ten years, who interested me from

the first. She was one of those little unfortunates that Topsy said just "grow'd."

The mother was living her secret life in a neighboring city. I took the child to train privately. Before the year came around again she had made fine progress. I think I have never enjoyed in any other token of remembrance such pleasure as came from the little handkerchief Bessie brought me on the Christ-birthday of that year.

"Mamma cried when I sang for her," said the child.

"What did you sing, little one?" I asked.

"Oh, I sang 'Jewels' and 'Will there be any Stars in my Crown?'"

"Tell your mamma I wish to see her," I said.

"I wanted mamma to come to-day, but she said you wouldn't want her," answered the innocent one.

"Tell her I do want her, sweetheart," I

said, guessing the probable reason of the woman's sensitiveness.

The following afternoon a faded-looking woman rang the bell diffidently.

"I'm Bessie's mother," she said timidly.

I took her hand and asked her in. It was a moment before she spoke; then she said with emotion, "I know what folks think of me, but I want to thank you."

I could not speak. Something in the woman appealed to me. I felt somehow she had been more sinned against than sinning, and up against this thought stood another, best expressed in those lines from "Aurora Leigh," which, you remember, Arthur, I quoted for you once before, when we sat watching the begrimed workers flock from the mills and factories toward their wretched homes in the slums:

"Poor blind souls
That writhed toward heaven along the devil's trail, —
Who knows, I thought, but He may stretch His hand
And pick them up? 'tis written in the Book

He heareth the young ravens when they cry;
And yet they cry for carrion. — O my God,
And we, who make excuses for the rest,
We do it in our measure."

Why, this woman, too, was a child of the king! Were we not sisters? When she left, her cheeks were tear-stained. I think my own eyes were not dry.

Arthur, would any one but you understand when I speak the truth and say I felt a spiritual uplift from contact with this woman of the street? So art often moves me — great poems, great pictures. Sublime cathedrals, and Nature, too, so affect me, when, alone, I let them speak to me.

And here was this sister, whom people called an outcast, striking the same chord — producing the same vibration — the same inspiration! Wonderful!

The hours seemed fraught with benediction. The brooding Mother-Presence was very near.

But a gossipy neighbor called and broke the spell. She grated harshly, like the laugh of rude boys when the play is at the climax; or like the slamming of heavy doors when the church is hushed in prayer.

31

"I press God's lamp
Close to my breast — its splendor, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day.
You understand me. I have said enough."

IT has been said, Arthur, that most of us are like drunken men on horseback — prop us up on one side, we lop over on the other. I believe it is also characteristic of the fellow who has put an enemy into his mouth to declare that his brains have not been stolen away. Our weak points, our protuberances and excrescences, are not always the first objects that appear to us along our mental horizon. The symmetrical individual — poised perfectly, physically, mentally, and spiritually — is a rare specimen. No wonder scientists declare there is but one

sane person in every five. It is Nature's recompense that each of course supposes himself to be that odd fifth fellow.

"Everybody is queer, except thee and me, Martha, and sometimes I think thee is a little queer," said the good Quaker to his wife. We can imagine Martha's reply. A grain of prejudice gives warped judgment; a little more emphasis, and you have the hobby-rider; a little stiffer conceit, and your crank loses balance entirely — over he goes. Still, cranks are necessary as well as balance-wheels.

Freedom-loving, when I needlessly fly in the face of custom you tell me, Arthur, that I lop to the anti-conventional; but when I saw the hired man eating gluttonously with his knife, and using his index-finger as a tooth-pick, I thanked good fortune for code and caste.

So operates the law of the tangent mentally. I'll grow modest; I do not forget

that through this prejudice I had some little bother in finding you, Arthur, who are a born conformist — an aristocratic democrat. Wheels within wheels, but no cog ever slips in this God-made mechanism.

I've just been looking over Helen Keller's book, and it has given me a fresh grip upon the altar-rails. It isn't because the truths in her "Optimism" are new to me. No, it's because she found them out, shut in all alone in her secret soul-chamber. In reading her book I listen to the testimony of a light that never was on sea or land, but shines brightest in the shadows; and I receive messages from still small voices that speak loudest in the silences. The potency of soul over sense spans a blind girl's eyes with rainbows and makes oblivion melodious. Hurrah for such music and such rainbows as wait on Helen Keller!

32

"We shall rest, and, faith, we shall need it, —
Lie down for an Æon or two,
Till the Master of all good workmen
Shall put us to work anew."

WE were debating the question, should we give up our simple life and enter the struggle in a larger town. It took us long, Arthur, to decide; the liberty we enjoyed was not easily surrendered. We pictured a home of our own, such as I had visioned even as early as that first visit of Aunt Sarah Silvering, with garden, flowers, and, above all, the freedom of the country.

Over against this stood the possibility of larger intellectual advantages, broader associations and friendships, offered by the city.

Who was the great bachelor who said, when rallied upon the subject of marriage: "I have

always regretted that I did not marry; but I knew, if I married, I should always regret that"?

There were days when we imagined we bought a lot, built our house, laid out our garden, planted our seeds, and felt the satisfaction of creation. Then came days when we longed for the friction and stimulus of the crowd, though the dear garden flowers — daffodils and daisies — seemed to hang their heads and talk of rank disloyalty.

We betrayed our first love. The city won us in the end.

We adjusted ourselves to our new environment by degrees, and drew about us our own "elect few." To be in the friendship of the many — spontaneous with those who are not upon your plane — is to court misunderstanding. To cater, to be other than yourself, is to stultify and dwarf. I thought I had a vague idea of the minister's feelings last Sunday, when I heard him shout:

"Understand, understand what I say, then believe me or not, as you please."

Arthur, have you ever said to a reasoning, thinking human being, — or, at least, to one who was supposed to think and reason and be human, — that you believe in the abolishment of capital punishment, and then hear it reported next day that you believe in murder? I have known things as unaccountable as that.

If you do not believe in war, coercion, arbitrary methods, and a thousand and one useless and disregarded statutory laws, be wise and hold your peace, or take your chances with mud and stones. To be a man, and think, has always been dangerous business. To be a woman, and think, must surely prove fatal — unwomanly, at least. Beg pardon! a woman cannot think, and is therefore safe. Another evidence of compensation.

What with crampings and caterings, con-

ventions and corsets, no wonder "society" produces so many insipid nonentities who make a safety-valve of fads and fashions. Pent-up energy must find vent. It takes the line of least resistance and goes on acting, manifesting, — for life cannot stand still. If your spiritual Hebrew, crushed and persecuted, can no longer breathe out poetry and sing psalms, he can concentrate his powers upon commercialism, until your Job and David differentiate into Shylocks, and your money-lords — the Jewish Rothschilds — sway a scepter more powerful than any royal family of modern Europe.

Shall we be wise? To conserve force is not enough. Direct it well, else ruin results.

33

Par. "Oh, but to find a wise man. A wise man!"
Her. "Yes, indeed, a wise man!"

HISTORY went on making. Financial anxiety was becoming a thing of the past. It is matter for regret, Arthur, that so many young professional men begin life with a lean pocket-book. A celebrated judge said recently: "I am thankful that I found myself in such financial condition from my father's estate that I could preserve my honor and integrity in the first strenuous days of my career."

What a jump forward will the old world take when

"No one shall work for money, and no one shall work
for fame;
But each for the joy of the working."

A young legal man of fine fiber once said to me, "I tell you, this is killing me! You see, I'm on the fence. Over on one side I see brotherhood, altruism; over on the other, it is 'every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost!' If I fail it is because I am not God enough for the one, nor beast enough for the other."

Much the same dilemma faces the young man who dabbles in lotions and potions.

The wealthy old man around the corner has fallen on the ice. They call the doctor, who looks him over carefully.

"You're all right, Mr. Jones," he says cheerfully. "Pretty badly used up, but you'll be out in a few days."

When the doctor takes his leave, friends gather about.

"My, I believe some bone must be broken," says one.

"When people are old, they say their bones are brittle," says friend number two.

"I knew a case once, where the doctor didn't find out the bone was broken for two weeks," says friend number three.

"I don't think that young fellow knows his business anyway," says friend number four.

And so they go on, until, ten chances to one, they send for another pill-man. If he is that "odd fifth fellow," he may confirm the first diagnosis; but, if he cares to do so, he can strain a moral point and please the people by reporting a contrary diagnosis, whereupon a nurse is sent for, they keep the patient in bed, the doctor charges well for his services, evolves the famous aldermanic front, wins success, travels abroad.

Meanwhile his honest rival pines and starves awhile, then, very likely, falls into line and marches with the rank and file.

"Temptations in the wilderness."

34

"Then Job answered and said, I have heard many such things; miserable comforters are ye all. Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answereth? I also could speak as ye do, if your soul were in my soul's stead."

AN epidemic of diphtheria that swept the city during the winter after our arrival left desolation in many homes. I knew each of his cases as did the doctor himself. Schools were closed, and every home was in fear and trembling, never knowing when the dreaded thing might enter. It was not rare for every child in a family to be taken.

I remember one case, where the prosperous, happy parents had never before suffered bereavement. Within six days their

two beautiful children were stricken fatally. Little Clarence was apparently convalescent, when the father came for the doctor in breathless haste.

"Doctor, my boy cannot speak aloud," and, catching my husband by the arm with a look and tone that combined threat and helpless appeal, he said, "Don't you dare let that child die!"

Two hours later, the man entered the office again, with halting gait and hardened face. I broke the silence forcefully:

"Dear man," I said, "others endure even greater loss."

"Oh, don't talk to me like that!" he flashed out reproachfully. "It won't feed a hungry man to know that others starve."

I felt helpless. He left, repeating:

"Nothing to live for — nothing to live for."

Before the week ended, they made another

little sleeping-place, for ten-year-old Annie, beside her brother Clarence. A week later, the father sought me out, and, taking my hand, said quietly: "I had to learn — but I'd be so thankful just to have little Annie back again."

35

"If we knew but one color, we should know no color. If our ears were to be filled with one monotonous roar of Niagara, unbroken by alien sounds, the effect upon consciousness would be absolute silence."

I SEATED myself on the side porch to have a long chat with you, this afternoon, Arthur.

One of Booker Washington's financial agents tells the story of the colored preacher who announced to his congregation that his subject was to be "Ardent Spirits," declaring himself to be full of his subject.

My subject differed from that of the colored brother, but I do remember that I was full of my subject — when lo! the housekeeper, approaching, sat down near, with her basket of carpet-rags. Presto, change! Everything took on a different hue.

She said she never turned her rags when she cut them, but sewed every end firmly. If you didn't, there would surely be lumps in your carpet, and, for her part, she hated lumps in a carpet. She said Miranda Peabody's carpets were full of lumps, but, for that matter, Miranda wasn't any housekeeper to begin with. The children always looked slip-shod, and, she said, she never knew her to have company without sending out to borrow something.

She said she thought old wool-underwear made the best rags, but they were awful hard to cut even. She said she thought Exception Dye held color on cotton better than any other; but, she said, she had heard that the firm had broken down — at least she couldn't find them in market the last time she inquired, and therefore, she said, the next carpet she made would be "hit and miss."

She said she had made one hundred and seventeen yards of carpet that year. Oh yes,

she said she had found a man-weaver who wove for ten cents a yard. She had been paying twelve before.

I think that covers the subject of the afternoon's conversation. I wondered and envied as she talked.

When I was alone again, I returned to my unfinished page, and saw staring at me blankly these words: "To see the"——and there the matter ended. I couldn't gather up the broken ends; consequently, other vibrations may be established in your "gray matter," when you scan these pages, than would have been established had that housekeeper stayed in her room, gone to the other side of the house, or eaten too freely of the strawberry shortcake, smeared over with whipped cream, which she gave us at the noon hour.

In the city, yesterday, I caught myself hesitating a moment before I chose one of the three exits from the great store I had

visited: and yet each little step makes a turning-point, sets up vibrations, carries with it influences which extend and widen forever.

Thoughts along these lines came to me when I walked over to the beach this morning and sat long time watching the human-like restlessness of the great lake. I grew interested in the white-capped waves traveling in — breaking and subsiding. Each one seemed to say, at the last: "There! I reached as far as I could." One, more mighty than its fellows, reached into the sand-land so far that the water stayed in a little pool, quiet, by itself. I thought the poor wave must feel isolated and lonesome, and almost regret the effort and triumph that left it away from comradeship — alone: but it soon sank into the sand, and there was nothing left to tell of the effort, — the triumph, — the aloneness and the *vanitas vanitatum.*

36

"Don't fear. It's all going to come out right, dear."

A GRAY hair in the coil of brown turned the current of my thoughts one morning when I found myself standing at thirty years. I looked back, Arthur, over the pathway I had traveled up to this full womanhood, and somehow the valley and the mountain-top experiences blended into a wonderfully harmonious whole — a beautiful picture. I believe some scientists claim that the inharmonious, rasping noises of lower earth blend together in the upper atmosphere, making mellow music.

Brush and hand-mirror lay in my lap, idle. Thirty years! In the old wood-bottomed rocking-chair I saw a little heap of developed protoplasm, cradled in white and carefully

guarded. How marvelous! Scarcely self-conscious, — helpless, — it lay there. And I wondered if my mother felt as I too well knew I should feel, if all myself I owned a little thing like that. Then they gave it a name to distinguish it from other little protoplastic masses, and soon the little mass learned to feel "I am I," over against "you are you," — and history commenced. The little "I-am-I" mass went out to look for happiness, even as others before it had done from the very beginning.

There were baby days, then little toddler days; little school-girl days — dark days — ambitious days — love-hungry days — disappointed days — days of temptation.

"Oh, how thankful I am to-day!" burst from me. "How I love every differentiated soul-atom ever sent into this strange old world!"

The little children passing, — I wanted to kiss them; the hardened-looking laborers, — I

wanted to take their hands; even the woman gossip across the street, who said such unkind things, — yes, I loved her too. This was a red-letter day, when I could sing with Pippa:

"God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world."

I was growing stronger each day. The world would call us happy and prosperous. The home we had seen in mind so long was to become a reality. Days of economy were over. Those summer days, we spent our spare time talking over and arranging the details of the new home.

At last, all worry and bustle were over. Contentment was with us. We had been settled a week.

I walked from room to room, and looked and looked. 'Twas all so dear! From the hall where the old clock stood at the top of the stairs (we had made a special effort to

get this rare old clock), I would go the rounds, satisfying that something in me which only a woman can understand. Into the parlor at the left, where almost everything was "perfectly new," I went, feasting and satisfied. There they were, the curtains, rugs, and odd chairs that had taken so much time in selecting, with the thought, "I'll get something good, for I'll have it all my life."

In the right-hand corner stood the piano; in the opposite corner my dear book-case, with the books peeping from behind the curtains, which were half-drawn. The flame in the fire-place threw its flickering light and pleasant glow over all. Yes, it was just as it should be, I felt, as I passed on through folding doors into the adjoining room, all our very own. Open grate, books, and periodicals, — this room had the genuine smack of home.

We had come into our new possessions in September. It was an October evening when

we sat there making plans, still looking into the future, still hoping, dreaming.

"I am very happy, very happy," he said, drawing his chair closer, and looking into my eyes questioningly, as if he saw the faintest shadow still deep down there.

"It's all going to come out right, dear," he said, in answer to a little tear that would force to the front while I answered bravely, smiling:

"Oh, that's just a joy-evidence! You know tears always come when I'm very happy."

November of that year, as it came, caught up a handful of October days and gave them to us lavishly. But the days were growing shorter and more leaden as the annual Thank-Day approached, which I had planned to celebrate with friends and a regulation "turkey dinner" in my own new home.

You say, Arthur, I do not seem to you like other women, but I am a woman after all.

Women, men, the best of us splendidly human, —"divinities playing fool."

I arranged the *menu* in my mind, — saw the new china and other table accessories dainty, snowy, and resplendent, — but I did not see all. The arrow that flieth in the dark was pointing toward my happiness, but I did not see it.

How important seemed those salads and pastries — till the sharp twang of the bowstring brought me awake amid the everlasting verities. Yes, I had been sleeping, dreaming. We should celebrate Thanksgiving, but not together. He had just time to repeat again: "It's all going to come out right, dear,"— then the great mystery of mysteries closed about him, and closed about me, while I walked alone.

37

"Think you it was only John on the Isle of Patmos who saw the heavens open?"

PERHAPS this, too, was a dream from which I should presently awaken! I had often dreamed dreams I wished to stay, — of something warm and dear, nestling in my arms, and drinking at my breast. Yes, perhaps it was all a dream; but the hushed hours wore on, doors closed softly, people came and went whisperingly, sad-faced friends kissed me tenderly, and I began to feel I should never waken to find this dreadful thing untrue.

With dry, sleepless eyes I looked, trying to realize, trying to penetrate, trying to reach with focused love-thoughts this one who always knew before. No answer came. Then

a silent soul-cry went forth that must have vibrated for response to the uttermost parts of the universe. I waited — the answer came back sure enough:

"Don't fear. It's all going to come out right, dear."

Oh, limitless, exhaustless God-forces! There was no more tumult. Yes, there would come tired days and lonesome days, valley days and mountain-top days; but these must come from the external personality. I had the secret of His presence where my soul could always hide.

Never think, Arthur, the victory was an easy one. They brought me back — how cold it was! The faint odor of flowers about the rooms made me heart-sick. Every room, every corner suggested our happiness — a memory. As they sang, so I repeated prayerfully, "Lead, kindly light," walking again through the desolate rooms of my home. Home? I had now no home, such as men

rear, builded by hands. Even my simple childhood home was no more, and I thought of the one who said: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests."

What to do, — where to go, — must be thought of with all the rest, and many days I staggered blindly, as one cruelly smitten, seeing not the next step; but ever and anon that Soul-voice sent its vibrations into my soul's innermost sanctuary — the Holy of Holies — and the peace that passeth understanding settled over all for the moment, while I rested satisfied.

38

"To tame
My mind down from its own infinity,—
To live in narrow ways with little men,
A common sight to every common eye."

EVIDENTLY I must remain quiet for the winter; at least until matters material could become adjusted to a new *regime*.

For company's sake, and to defray expenses, "roomers" were suggested. A modest advertisement in the columns of the city paper was soon answered by a young physician, who not only took such books and instruments as were at disposal, but, liking the location, engaged the offices and hung up his new sign.

A young Danish minister, who had charge

of the spiritual welfare of a small flock of his countrymen in the South End, was the next roomer who took up his abode in the house for the winter.

And now I began to realize more than ever that life means only a series of experiences, turning-points; nothing is permanent or secure but transition and life-essence.

So broken on the potter's wheel, I felt every one must be my friend and helper. But I grew to know what the banker, who shook my hand so cordially with moist eyes, meant when he said, "Anything we can do for you will make us most happy."

More difficult to understand was the whispered counsel of the woman who said, "Aren't you afraid to keep these two men roomers?"

To my answer that I really enjoyed them in my house, that they were considerate and courteous, she said, —

"H'm! You do not know the world."

Well, if I didn't I should have to learn. And as I came to learn more and more, I grew to think, if so-called heathen were to be asked why they offer up the widow on the husband's funeral-pile, they might answer wisely, "There are reasons."

I can understand why animals rend each other in hunger or passion. I can even excuse my kind when they strike, burn, rob, and murder, if thwarted or wounded by a person or system when they reach out for gratification; but I could never yet understand that hideous impulse developed in many, perhaps in all human animals, to sow destruction out of pure heedlessness or maliciousness, to make another poor and not enrich themselves. If there is no scientific explanation of this thing, here is an opening for a new "ism," "ology," or what-not.

So runs my thought; but what am I?—an atomic center caught in the spiral of evolution, even as a million others, yea, even as

every manifesting, vibrating universal atom. The same origin, the same road to travel, the same destiny; and this my soul seems to realize right well.

Legal formalities, red tape, and business had been gone through with during that long winter. I could now call matters practically settled. I would sell everything and go east to Boston town itself. My nerves asked for change. The doctors advised it, — I would go.

39

"To sell the boat — and yet he loved her well —
How many a rough sea had he weather'd in her!"

AS Enoch felt, so felt I, as the last of my household gods passed into cold, stranger hands. All except my dear Books. I could carry half a dozen of them, small burden and great company; the rest a friend stored for me.

Thirty years I had functioned, evolved, run, walked up and down, in and out, here and there, along the roads, lanes, and by-paths of western New York and northwestern Pennsylvania. I could not go away unmoved from the little nucleus of association I had formed. Tears followed one another over my cheeks as the jarring, plunging, shrieking train moved rapidly away with me that day

toward the New England metropolis. Memories came thronging thick and fast as the shadows lengthened over the landscape and shut out from my sight the familiar scenes of a lifetime.

"Had not his poor heart
Spoken with That which being everywhere
Lets none who speaks with Him seem all alone,
Surely the man had died of solitude."

40

"At times I almost dream
I too have spent a life the sages' way,
And tread once more familiar paths."

COMING into the South Terminal station the next morning, I thought of the woman who said if she couldn't be in heaven, she was glad to have gotten as far as Boston.

I found a suitable boarding-place with little trouble, reveled in soap and water, took a short nap, dressed, ate luncheon, and "went out for to see."

A step brought me to the Public Library on Copley square. What an accumulation was before me of the best thoughts of the sanest ones of all time! For three thousand years

or more, rockets had been sent up and out into the darkness, to signal other voyagers sailing over the ocean of experience, who cried out forever, "Watchman, what of the night?" A blue rocket, a white-light rocket, a blood-red rocket; — but the spectrum reveals about the same elementals.

I found Sargent had left a portion of his soul on the walls, which I should study later. Under a glass I saw two bronzed hands, one a slender, veined woman's, representing the hand that wrote "Aurora Leigh," clasped in the strong, manly hand that wrote — well, everything, "Pippa," "Saul," "Rabbi Ben Ezra"; and made Andrea Del Sarto say to Lucretia:

> "Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
> And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside."

I once heard a woman preacher say, in a lecture at Chautauqua, that shallow-brained women read Browning as a fad, never com-

prehending what the man meant, "any more than he did himself when he wrote it"!

"But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome; 'tis we musicians know."

From Socrates and Jesus, coming along down to Wagner and Browning, — even to you and me, Arthur, — are we indeed "Islands shouting lies to each other across seas of misunderstanding"?

But our reverend friend has her insight. Farther on in the lecture she explained why these same shallow-brained creatures are allowed to cumber the earth: "How could woman be anything but stupid and insipid?— God was making a mate for man." Mrs. Poyser, in "Adam Bede," was evidently of the same opinion.

The Public Garden was the place for rest that afternoon. I could watch the jostling people out on Boylston and Tremont streets, as they hurried along up and down. Where

were they going? What was the haste? — universal space before them and eternity back of them; no chance of missing — doomed to get there.

I read on a monument through the trees:

"And there shall be no more pain."

I thought I could believe it all, and more perhaps than was intended, for the monument commemorated the discovery of ether by a Boston physician. Even so much was advancement — a great blessing. But may the time not come when a larger metaphysics shall indeed help our physics?

41

"The divine relation which in all times unites a great man to other men."

SEVERAL days I spent visiting places of historic interest, until a hazy afternoon found me at Mount Auburn. You know well, Arthur, the painful ravishment that comes to the soul who meets God face to face, and alone. Did those of old time feel something of this when they said, "No man can look upon His face and live"? They had their burning bushes, too.

Out of the hurry and scurry, rumble and jumble, of the city of the living, into the peaceful serenity of the city of the dead! Such dead! Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Sumner, Brooks, Agassiz, Choate, Channing, Booth, Charlotte Cushman, Fanny Fern, —

only a few months ago they were jostling with the crowd, down Boylston street, along Tremont street, over there in the busy metropolis. Where were they this day when I came so far to see them? I wanted to tell them I had seen their signals afar off and felt more secure in the darkness.

On the plain marble slab before me I read:

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW,
Born 1807 — Died 1882.

Some years before, in a tiny cell, lay the latent creations of the man who was to come forth and be known to the world as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The dormant cell, touched by another cell, felt the quiver of life and began to stir. Days passed, and that little cell — clothed and in its right mind — walked among its kind, self-conscious, brother-conscious, God-conscious; suffering, but singing. Did all this unfold with the physical

cell-development, or did some psychic atom, ages old in experience, take up its abode in clay for purposes best known to the Great Spirit itself?

The myriad of thought-entities sent out from this soul-center, which had touched my own years before, now came thronging back. Listening, the charming meter of "Hiawatha" beat upon me once more. I heard the priest saying again to Evangeline:

"Man is unjust but God is just, and finally justice triumphs."

Bending lower, I fancied I could hear Paul Fleming reading aloud to Mary Ashburton, out among the Swiss hills:

"Into the Silent Land!
Ah, who shall lead us thither?
Clouds in the evening sky more darkly gather,
And shattered wrecks lie thicker on the strand.
Who leads us with a gentle hand
Thither, oh, thither,
Into the Silent Land?"

Then came rejection, the struggle, and the victory; for Mary's heart did not awake until she read "Hyperion."

I drew away reluctantly from this one who knew so well the story of strength and suffering.

I heard Lowell plead once more that day for brotherhood and human freedom. Holmes grew genial over the tea-cups, and Phillips Brooks talked of deep things with childlike simplicity. I saw Charlotte Cushman and Edwin Booth walking the boards again, thrilled and thrilling; and Louis Agassiz working patiently, deciphering the story of the earth written in her rocks and fossils.

Climbing the tower, I looked off dizzily towards the smoky city. The dome of the State House loomed up proudly on Beacon Hill. Trolley-cars were crossing and recrossing the Charles, steam-cars and ferry-boats were in sight, carrying their loads of human

freight. So far I saw. But clouds closed around about the things I fain would see.

Goethe's last words were, "More light." Hugo pleaded for extension of life, that the unwritten volumes pent up within his marvelous brain might come forth into the light of day.

This cannot be all, I thought; God will never allow such waste, — in the universal economy all is safe.

The lights of Cambridge shone through the rain and mist when I changed cars for Boston; but the "feeling of sadness and longing that my soul could not resist" had left me when, before leaving Mount Auburn, I sang in the chapel,

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee,
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me."

42

"Well, to live long and see the darkness breaking, and the day coming! the day when soul shall not thrust back soul that would come to it."

I'VE met something here, Arthur, that points toward heaven as surely as the buds and tender grass, — a young girl of seventeen years, taken from school and companionship five years ago to do household work and care for an invalid mother. She gives me the soul-touch, and I give her a few small things in the way of orthography, etymology, syntax, and so forth. The balance shows me the debtor.

Yesterday she handed me lines which I copy, because I know you will be interested :

"THOUGHTS.

"In perfect trust she waits,
Nor cares what the morrow may bring forth.
Why should she, one little soul,
Go struggling through this life?
Had she not suffered much —
Enough to learn that, struggle as she might,
She could not change the laws
Of One who gave her life?
Is it not better to accept His will?
Does she not know that all is for the best?

"Love, beauty in all the simple life around,
The flowers, the birds, and rolling hills —
Simple did I say? Dear one,
Simple because we cannot understand
The purpose of that great Almighty Hand
That rules this world
And all the world's unknown to human mind.

"She sat by the window idly musing,
Watching the throngs of souls that passed her by.
Some with impatient feet were hurrying,
The sordid pleasure of their life to test.
Would they drain the cup to find
In its bitter dregs dissatisfaction,
Telling their lives were spent in waste?

"Here passes a face so lonely and so sad;
There another with halting gait and crime-marked face: —
How she longs to take their hands,
To make their tired souls glad,
Telling them that, by the grace of God,
Here waits a longing sister soul
Striving to reach the same great goal.
She turns away. They would not understand.
'Oh for the time,' she murmurs,
'When we can take each other's hand
With perfect love and sympathy, —
Then we shall understand.'

"There are many years to wait, dear,
Uncounted in the great forever;
Years in which our souls must grow,
Before we all shall reach that goal
And merge in one great Universal Soul."

There's a lump in my throat, and tears come as I write of this little one who comes so near and dear to me. Good stay with her! Shut-in so many years, she cannot ring the bell at a neighbor's door without great fear and trembling. I imagine she could rap with some confidence upon other doors, — for in-

stance the house of many mansions, not made with hands, where "real swell quality" dwell, too. That would be a case of the Old Folks at Home — kinship.

This is but one of the wayside weeds that the world tramples upon unheeding. Transplanted to some Gardner estate, what would we get then?

This brings to mind another girl, whom I saw caught in a spelling contest, at a "country teachers' association," years ago. After correcting their long lists of words that had been written down in hurried excitement, a young professor, of the lean and hungry type, requested the company to stand. They then seated themselves according to their number of misspelled words. All were soon seated excepting one young girl, who stood on blushing to the bitter end, feeling, no doubt, as cats are said to feel when they find themselves prowling around in strange places — more especially garrets.

Spelling long since "ceased from troubling" that little girl. She does some things fairly well, considering. She has read me some rather good verses of her own, and she claims modestly that she almost suffers at times with the ravishment of great genuine poems that come and go, vanishing away among the lost chords of earth. She talks strangely, too, of luring thoughts and fancies that baffle and defy all words, even when correctly spelled.

Those simpering pedagogues of other days are still discussing ways and means along cramming-process lines, believing the long established always adequate, — they never burrowed deep down around the roots; never took a trip off through airy spaces on the rainbow-tinted wings of the ideal. They weren't built for sky-travel. Surface lines, elevated roads, and subways!

To keep in touch with and analyze carefully that little girl of spelling-test renown

has been a foolish ambition with me ever since. I didn't become interested in her because of her mistakes, but because she stood and blushed when she might have sat down with the rest.

I wonder sometimes if she would stand on so now while others smiled and tittered. You know, Arthur, she was very young then, and if she had heard about the pearls and swine story, she hadn't taken it very much to heart. However, when I talked with her last, she said she knew what it is to be turned upon and rended. She's queer, certainly, but I like her better than anybody else, — excepting you, Arthur.

When at parties and places she behaves very much after the can-opening style. Last week, at a club gathering, I did once catch a far-away look in her eyes, and heard her gentleman satellite say something about admiration for abstract moods, and wonder at her thoughts.

He wasn't the first in all this world to wonder, — was he, Arthur? Yes, she's no fool. In another test I believe she would sit down with the rest — unless some one was to be hurt by said sitting down; but that's another phase, to be taken up anon.

43

"Awakened with a start, I depart,
Whither I know not; but the hour's gone by."

QUITE a little time had come and gone since I stepped from the train that morning, a stranger in a strange land. But I had learned to love Boston and its people.

The stern New England winter was past, and spring days were with us at last. My first outing, I decided, must be a visit to old Concord.

The day came at last, a perfect day, when even the cattle, as the seer says, lie on the ground and think great thoughts.

I placed a light lunch in my hand-bag, and started out early. It would be another one

of my days — dream-days, I'll call them. Arthur, do we not all see beautiful pictures, hear wonderful melodies, live Christ-like in our dream-world? Gladly at such times would we too send up a rocket — hold up our signal, saying "Behold, fellow-mortals! this I see, this I hear, this I dream."

What wonder we feel misunderstood when our instruments are faulty, or when we fail in manipulation!

"Take you to all important points, ma'am!" said the eager hackman, handing me a neat descriptive card. The day was before me, — I chose to walk.

Out past the old cemetery the road led me, until I recognized the place where, for many years, lived the unostentatious man who sent the schools to school — Ralph Waldo Emerson. God indeed let loose a thinker on the planet when this one came.

I took my way to the orchard opposite the house, sat down under the trees, and fell to

musing and hero-worshiping, as I surveyed everything before me in detail. I saw nothing unusual, — there were the out-buildings, the trees, the woodpile — quite commonplace. Why, how, and where did he find it all?

True, it is a beautiful spot of earth, this Concord around about; but cold and heat and famine and fear could come here, too, bringing the story of hunger and pain.

I sat on — ceasing for the time to be "importuned by emphatic trifles." But three girls on bicycles, coming down the Lexington road, wakened me with that shock which comes when the actual crushes into the ideal.

"Do you think she looks pretty, mornings, in that red wrapper?" asked Number One.

"No, but she thinks she does," answered Number Two.

"Isn't this the old Emerson place?" asked Number Three — and they were out of sight.

Getting up slowly, and brushing the dust

from my skirt, I moved on along the Lexington road a short distance, to the old homes of Hawthorne and Alcott; — Alcotts, father and daughter, almost as beautiful to contemplate as that other royal pair, Robert and Elizabeth Browning.

Plain, unpractical, misunderstood man, Bronson Alcott. Emerson, who much valued the man, felt obliged to apologize for him always, even to Carlyle. That reminds me, Arthur! — did you read the correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle? You know, I was always in love with the surly old Sage of Chelsea! Consequently, I never felt that Jane Welch suffered so much, after all. She knew the great soul of her husband; and what are the moods of a dyspeptic, overworked, cramped man to glints and flashes, signs and touches known to souls!

To consort with Herr Teufelsdröckh, in those moments when he tells of hearing the grass grow with his quick tympanum, would

atone for many overturned tables and erratic doings all around. Mental kinship ignores details. Jane Welch was fit companion for the great flesh-bound soul of Thomas Carlyle.

Nearly opposite the Hawthorne home I found a half-dozen men working with a road-machine. An old Irishman stood leaning upon his shovel as I approached. When asked for information regarding these places of interest, he appeared very willing to open his stock of knowledge.

"Ye shpake to a man of fifty year in the town, lady," he said proudly. "I married me woman from the home of Misther Emerson, yender, I did."

I was interested, and the old man continued with animation:

"That Misther Emerson wuz no man for money-makin' at all. He wuz jist great on that 'ere stuff, philosophy — he wuz."

He then proceeded to relate the story of the seer failing to teach a young calf to drink

from the pail, when his Bridget came to the rescue with the practical device of introducing her finger into the calf's mouth and leading it to the milk thus.

As I left, the man said, shaking his head thoughtfully, "Well, I'm thinkin' as how God made ivery wan good fer suthin' er other, and ther ain't no two of us alike, ye moind."

It was late when I climbed the ridge in Sleepy Hollow, and threw myself down, tired, near the grave of Emerson, — the cool, mossy ground beneath me, and the shady, canopy trees above; no roar, no smoke, no screeching nor combat here.

Overhead, through the foliage, I watched a soft, fleecy cloud sailing along serenely. Where was it going? What was its mission?

Off through another opening in the green, the crescent moon hung pale and filmy as the cloud itself. Somewhere, other eyes, tired eyes, happy eyes, were looking up at this

same cloud and moon, — wondering, fearing, waiting, trusting.

And that moon was looking down, perhaps, on the old farm home, with mother's neglected flower-garden, and the thousand and one familiar nooks and corners of the early days.

Then my thoughts ran along to my own broken home, and to another grave, far away, marked by a simple stone, on which was written :

" It's all going to come out right, dear."

Even then, while I laid my hands firmly on the altar-bars, all unconsciously I was drawing near the brink again, where through long days and months the forces let me hang balancing over black abysses in seeming mockery.

Darkened stairways ! Cries and sobbings ! Mother voices. Trust and slumber.

44

"God has conceded two sights to a man —
One, of men's whole work, time's completed plan,
The other, of the minute's work, man's first
Step to the plan's completeness."

OUR mutual friend Shirley is growing into a mild iconoclast — at last.

In a recent letter I found the following, which, characteristically, he had labeled "An Affirmative Song":

"O Lord, deliver us from all good people who leer, holding their petticoats (and other petty things) high and dry from others.

Deliver us from the bronze monument on the square,

Horses with nostrils distended, wild rearing and plunging in battle,

Men falling backward, heart-pierced, in torture and writhing.

Deliver us from losses and bosses and crosses.

Deliver us from judgments and justices human.
Deliver us from prostitution, married or not — rank, rampant, and rotten — foul-smelling to heaven.
Let exchange of force be free, spontaneous, flowing.
Deliver us from all cruelty, crampings, and corsets.
Deliver us from all ranters, in pulpit, in press, or on platform.

"Not so, Lord! but deliver us from pride and ourselves! we are all these, and much more than these have we zigzagged.
In the great test, we are they and they are we. Softly,
These are they that shall shine as the stars in the heavens!
Deliver us from naught but unfaith, unlove, and unfreedom.
Allah is great! His nature endureth forever!"

Whitman tells the same story, somewhat better than does Shirley:

"Courage yet, my brother or my sister!
Keep on — Liberty is to be subserv'd whatever occurs;
That is nothing that is quell'd by one or two failures, or any number of failures,
Or by the indifference or ingratitude of the people, or by any unfaithfulness,
Or the show of the tushes of power, soldiers, cannon, penal statutes.

"What we believe in waits latent forever through all the continents,
Invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and light, is positive and composed, knows no discouragement,
Waiting patiently, waiting its time.

"I do not know what you are for (I do not know what I am for myself, nor what anything is for),
But I will search carefully for it even in being foiled,
In defeat, poverty, misconception, imprisonment — for they too are great."

45

"And, by a sleep, to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to."

"LIE still, dear."

The words sounded strange and far away, but I obeyed with childlike trustfulness, and forgot again.

It was midnight when I opened my eyes and tried to understand. Oh, yes, the white bed, the screen, the dim light, the nurse bending over me, — yes, and the pain.

"It's all over," said the sympathetic girl, kissing me gently — and then I remembered.

Long weeks of illness, ministering hands — but stranger, still; the hospital, iodoformic

odors, the anæsthetic room, the cone over my face, the first choking sensation — then peace and forgetfulness.

O brother, friend! when they told me I might never go about again, I had a chance to test my philosophy, and it stood the test. But in those first waking moments great weakness was upon me; weakness of body and weakness of spirit; and I could not be grateful for their hot-water bags, their salt solutions, and their strychnine hypos, that gave me back to consciousness.

I wanted to go back to the land of forgetfulness — "into the Silent Land" — and cross no more bridges. The road I had come seemed so rough and mountainous, I was so tired, I never wanted to contend any more; but Nature heeded not. Who and what was I to be heeded? Just that same restless, unsatisfied protoplasmic mass that had wasted so much energy scrambling for happiness, ever since that other day when she, or rather

it, was thrown out into objective existence with a cry.

And so I lay there, helpless, and thought and thought, my mind circling round and round ever to the same point, like a man lost in a deep, dark forest. Sometimes I was in the seventh heaven, trusting, serene, most satisfied; then, with a turn of the wheel, fear was upon me. Beads of perspiration moistened my pallid face at the thought of accumulating expense — no home, and the sordid world out there grinding and groaning.

Who can understand the correlation of the higher and the lower, or explain the blending of physical, mental, and spiritual?

Is the One Force — the basic principle, the real essence in everything — pressing on in advanced or retarded evolutionary processes? Is nothing "either good or bad, but thinking makes it so"?

There I lay, so still, and thought. So many things to think about! So many ques-

tions to be answered! So many problems to solve!

In other crises I had learned the secret;—but we forget so easily. Persistent self!—source of all our annoyance! O God! must these things be, ere we shall think — ere we shall think?

46

"The place seemed new and strange as death.
The white strait bed, with others strait and white,
Like graves dug side by side at measured lengths,
And quiet people walking in and out,
With wonderful low voices and soft steps."

THE additional expense made me almost glad the private rooms were all occupied, and so, the fourth day, I was taken into my little corner, in ward C, to make room for the newly operated.

The grotesque dress of convalescents served a purpose in taking my attention, momentarily, out of the circuit it had been traveling. Some strange fatality had crowded the stout women into the narrow "Hubbards," while gowns of more ample fold hung loosely about their leaner sisters. Old gray wool and cot-

ton skirts often showed below the unironed blue gingham dresses, and in many cases the gray cotton socks worn were unmated in color.

But what were faded gowns and cotton socks where so much sorrow lingered? Over in the second bed a young Swede woman lay dying. Each evening, after a day of labor, came the devoted young husband, who spoke broken English, and looked all that anxious love could express.

"Take me home, no one loves me here!" said the woman, as she threw herself about frantically; and her talk became more wild and delirious.

No special attention could possibly be given to any patient by the already overworked nurses of that great municipal institution. Dying woman, tired nurses, worried doctors, charitable donors, and magistrates, all were caught and held feeble victims by the greedy monster of commercialism.

Nineteen hundred years had passed since a manger-born one taught, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." We called ourselves his followers, and here was how we "followed,"— singing psalms, waving palms, erecting great cathedrals to the glory of God and the memory of millionaires.

Oh, consistency! Much I marveled. Yes, compassion was in the world; earnest, honest men and women, working along the lines of expediency, while the tragedy stalked before all eyes and Jesus was crucified again daily. And, Arthur, — I could not help it, — in all reverence and sincerity I grew to think that perhaps there are more fools in the world than hypocrites. For what sane person could ever hope to live the Golden Rule in a social order founded on business competition, which fosters selfishness and all that is anti-Christian? Any one, under such a system, who carries altruism farther than the Sunday-

school class will very quickly be overtaken by the poorhouse or the insane asylum.

I could not blame the tired nurse who said crossly of that neglected, dying sister, "Well, she's getting all she pays for!" That nurse was talking "business." She had become immersed to the ears, soaked full of the economic environment that calls the unit of value the Almighty Dollar, disregards precious human life, tells us we are living in an arrested era, affirms that competition is the law of life, quotes the survival of the fittest, and comes back at you with the idea of future reward and the utility of sorrow!

No — I had not forgotten — I believed then as now, that the whole tendency, through long stretches of time, must be toward betterment; I tried to keep serene. But evolutionary battles may be quite as deadly as those of revolution. I was a silent witness to only a detail of the struggle of the ages when I lay helpless on my white cot and saw the

coming of that husband. White screens and silence were about the little bed he had visited so faithfully. He was poor, he was unlearned, he was helpless —"crunched in the jaws of a theft"— but he had a heart, made of common, mortal heart-stuff; he had loved and was bereaved, like others.

Where flowed the wealth created by this hard-worked son of earth, that the woman he loved must suffer and die in acknowledged neglect?

Creation and accumulation — poverty and exploitation! Would this old world ever work its way out of sordid materialism? Would men, seeing the women who bear their children die neglected, restrain their anger forever?

I kept thinking.

47

"One arrives at art only by roads barred to the vulgar — by the road of prayer, of purity of heart; by confidence in the wisdom of the Eternal, and even in that which is incomprehensible."

I WENT to the city by trolley yesterday, and some more experiences came to me, Arthur, which I feel like telling you.

Certain ornamental advertising cards, staring at passengers from opposite sides of the car, freely gave to an ungrateful public valuable bits of information, which I in turn generously pass on to you. One card said that if a person wants a real money-making set of brains (and who doesn't?) he should eat "Fig Nuts." Another said something about "Our Own Salve" being the best on the market, — that all others are spurious

and perhaps dangerous, while "Our Own" is sure cure for cuts, burns, frost-bites, rheumatism, corns, and a "vague unrest and a nameless longing in the breast."

It reminded me of the old man who prayed, —"God bless me and my wife, my son John and his wife, us four and no more."

But the text of the day was furnished by a certain hoboish-looking individual who sat at the further end of the seat I had chosen. There were three passengers when I boarded the car, but it began to fill rapidly as we approached the city. As time passed, your democratic sister was pushed along into closer relations with brother hobo. One seating space was left, and I peeked out of the corner of my eye at my neighbor. Hat slouched, coat shiny and frayed, as were the trousers; shoes rusty and full of holes — out of one great hole protruded a toe, wisely taking Nature's line of least resistance. The

hands, neck, and ears, now so near me, pointed a moral to the advertisements overhead, telling of porcelain baths and soap that floats. Face unshaven, teeth, hair, and nails uncared for, — just here came the fat woman, one of the typical kind loaded with shopping packages and an umbrella to poke into your ear and knock against your hat. Puffing, panting, perspiring, and red, in uncomfortable clothing, yet under all circumstances smiling and beaming, — God bless fat women!

The lady must be seated. My right-hand neighbor, of the wizened, thin-lipped variety, looked at me menacingly and nudged me along. Closer proximity to my friend on the left brought into operation other sense-centers. Olfactory nerves were carrying messages, and up went nose in revolt. Auditory nerves reported the wheezy, rattling breath, and I counted the blocks to the next transfer-station.

No, Arthur, I didn't for a moment shift

my basic idea of brotherhood. To be consistent does not necessarily mean that one must eat, sleep, or converse upon art and philosophy, with a hottentot, a hobo, or a woodchuck. Just be merciful! Don't put your heel upon their necks. In due time great evolutionary forces, sweeping around and about, will take care of them. Hands off! That hobo has all eternity and all space to clean up in.

48

"Sick and in prison and ye visited me; I was a stranger and ye took me in."

FOUR weeks had passed at the hospital. I could sit up and walk about carefully, and was told I could soon go home. Go home! Then I fell to planning.

The next day a plainly dressed, serene-looking woman halted before my bed and asked the privilege of placing some religious literature upon my table.

"We are told 'whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,'" said the gentle voice.

The face and the voice won me. I answered, "Something says 'fear not.'"

A gleam of pleasure shot out from the woman's eyes. She asked, "When do you go home?"

A word of explanation, and she led me to the dressing-room as gently as a sister. Arrangements were made for my removal without delay — I was going home.

That evening found me resting on the sofa in the cosy sitting-room of a wood-carver's simple home, while "mother set the table" in the neat kitchen dining-room adjoining; then waited with me until half-past six, when "Pa," and Walter, the son, came from their work.

"God bless this food to our bodies' use," prayed the father, as we bowed our heads reverently over the supper-table; "bless the stranger who has come among us, strengthen her, body and soul, so that she may not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord."

The beauty and simplicity in this home calmed the troubled waters of my restless spirit. Three months I lived with these God-people, away from rasping, sordid things; and then, growing stronger, I dropped back

into the vortex with my faith once more strengthened in babes and sucklings.

When we run against an obstacle in the dark, we realize our rate of speed. I found I was gathering momentum somewhat again, when they handed me a telegram :

"Father is failing, can you come?"

Shout, contend, press, and counter-press in your human pandemonium! I go aside to breathe and reflect a moment, to take myself back into the presence of the old mystery and the silences.

49

"All the hapless silent lovers,
All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous and the wicked,
All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living, all the dying.
Pioneers! O pioneers!"

POOR, dear father. I didn't know how much I loved him until I entered that quiet room, with its faint medicinal odors. The pure white of the linen about the sick-bed made a fitting back-ground for a face of character intensified by days of pain and waiting. The fine, firm mouth, aquiline nose, and dark, deep-set eyes beneath a square forehead, spoke of other things than stumps and stones and sordidness. Mayhap one of Carlyle's tragedies had been enacted here —

the cramping of a nature possessing capacity for grand achievement.

I had always been timid and distant with my father until this moment, when all reserve was gone. Now I knew him, and he knew me. Oh, shy, strange something, deep within, — magic-working, inherent, — we know you when you show yourself, and we trust, as babes suck sureliest in the dark. If all else be lies and vanity, here is reality.

It was a joy, those few remaining days, to sit by that bedside, holding the hand that had lost all hardness, and to tell, in parts and snatches, this story of my life, even as I am telling it to you; — sometimes sweetly and serenely, often brokenly, but always for the sake of confiding. Oh, to confide the thing on our hearts to those who understand, and, understanding, love!

All along the life-journey, new surprises had lain in wait for me. I had continually

chanced upon the rarest gems hidden away in rubbish-piles and obscure places.

Earlier or later, even so had the treasure-houses of the heart and soul been opened up to me. Friend, lover, mother, brother, — and now I had found a father.

50

"So mothers have God's license to be missed."

MOTHERS, yes, and fathers too; and I should soon be missing mine. But it's not for those who know and love to walk despairing and unconsoled when separation comes. No, it's for some one gone away who did not know, but should have known.

True soul-communion, Arthur, comes very near bridging over the chasm between the living and the dead. But to sit at the same table with one who does not speak your language, — does not know, — here is space indeed that no wire or wireless message can ever overcome.

To-day so runs my dream.

51

"Who, in all this world,
Has never hungered? Woe to him who has found
The meal enough!"

AND now came my turn to listen, — father and daughter, each to the other, confessed and confessor. And, when stript of all detail, how very much alike, Arthur, look the heart-experiences of all men!

Onward, up, the way led us, through the baby days, the boy days, the dreaming days, the ambitious days, the crushed-in-the-bud days, the fall-into-line, march-with-the-file days, to the hardened, no-way-out days. Turn, turn, grind, grind, till the vital fires burned low, the wheels moved slowly, belts slackened, and the clatter and clang of

machinery dropped into an almost painful hush.

"Yes, little girl," said my father one evening, as I lay with my head beside his on the pillow; "yes, even helpless and pained as I am now, I am feasting upon you every moment, and wondering what happiness might mean if we could go over it all and have mother back again! No, no, not with things as they were, God knows; but with some social arrangement more human, more adapted to love, life, and liberty; — some order where men did not make it a business to deal in blood and flesh.

"Yes, I know, I am just as guilty as any of them. I tried to grab and plunder, myself, regardless; but evidently my genius didn't lie in that direction. Perhaps I wasn't one of the 'fittest to survive,' that they tell so much about. In reality, I guess nobody wants anyone but the fittest to survive! — but will the test of the 'fittest' always be

as it is in the tiger's jungle? It looks as if something else ought to enter into things. To be fighting and plundering always, in order to find out who's fittest, doesn't seem much like peace on earth, or good will, does it?

"It sounds strange to hear your father talk of peace and good will, doesn't it, dear! but it's come to me at last that we are something more than animals, Mabel. Plato would probably find himself outdone in a prize-fight, and I imagine Jesus wouldn't feel much at home down amidst the bull and bear business of Wall street.

"Long ago when men began to take wives, and children followed, we find love and mutual interest entered into affairs. The family and tribes came about first, then cities, States, and Nations arose. It looks now as if some still greater 'combine' of the world's forces must result sooner or later. No, child, I don't imagine that everybody will become

angelic in a moment. We've been creeping along up, — it's quite a distance yet to the top. Once we thought we couldn't rid ourselves of black slavery, but we did, and now we have to deal with white slavery. It won't do to get discouraged, — we must go right on breaking shackles. We may say to men, 'Be free, be free,' but they can't be truly free with society sitting on their backs. We may preach to men, 'Be good, be good,' but how can they be truly good and be at war all the time! All 'business' is founded on competition, and selfish competition means war. Golden rules and war can't mix, any more than oil and water.

"I wonder men don't see there's a screw loose somewhere; but I didn't myself until I was almost crushed alive in the old machine. We've been in this condition of things so long we really don't know what brutes we have become. Things happen around us every day that would shock, or ought to

shock, a civilized man; but it's like the night, — so common we don't think anything about it. If a widow has a few pennies laid by for a rainy day, and a 'fittest to survive' fellow comes along and robs her of her little sum, she may starve or go on the street, — nobody cares. They call such men clever fellows and pass it along.

"And then to think of the great waste to the world in invention and beautiful things! Crusts, clothes, corners to stand in, come up for first consideration. 'Side-issues' take their chances. But men love to express and create, and we get some things worth while now and then in spite of it all. What would we have if men stopped trying to trip each other, and all pulled together!

"The thought of my own wasted life doesn't so much hurt me now, as the thought of my own hardness and cruelty. But, Mabel, when you sit here and stroke my head, I feel it means forgiveness, and I guess they'll all

forgive me. I couldn't see any way out. You know one grows dazed, benumbed. If it's a shoestring, or a seat in the synagogue, selfishness controls.

"No, child, I'm not tired. It rests me to talk to you. It gives me more confidence to walk out into the darkness, though I really never feared. I guess after all it will be all right, somewhere."

After musing a moment, father continued:

"Human love teaches us a great deal. Oh! if I had taken time to love more, I might have — well, no matter. I remember the summer morning, years ago, when you first came. I let you cuddle your little soft face in my sunburnt neck a moment, your warm baby breath was upon me, your tiny life-pulses newly throbbing with blood so like my own, — and great swells of feeling vibrated through me. God, such love! but it's a moment out of years. Then the panic of '73 came rushing down upon us, and I

forgot — forgot and became a machine; and worse, for machines can't get tired and anxious, hard and cruel. Insanity! And still they tell us we must keep up this conflict forever — contend and fight and murder, because men 'grow' so!

"Later, your brothers went and filled the house with books — books of the head and of the heart. I picked up bits here and there. I opened my eyes — commenced to think again; and I found, however reasoning and methods may differ, men deep down are brothers. They all love love, and hate hate. Then came the new and satisfying consciousness that the whole grand drift is toward world-wide brotherhood. What a dream!"

52

I say to thee, — do thou repeat
To the first man thou mayest meet
In lane, highway, or open street, —
That he, and we, and all men, move
Under a canopy of Love
As broad as the blue sky above;
That doubt and trouble, fear and pain
And anguish, all are shadows vain;
That death itself shall not remain.
And one thing further make him know, —
That to believe these things are so,
This firm faith never to forego,
Despite of all which seems at strife
With blessing, all with curses rife, —
That this is blessing, this is life.

THE clock struck out the clear stroke of one, and I started up nervously.

"Don't, don't, child," said my father gently, "I've been watching you rest, and it

seemed almost like that other time, over thirty years ago."

"But," I suggested, "the medicine, father!"

"Oh, I know, but there's better medicine than bottles hold."

I gave the quieting potion to my patient, and replenished the wood fire to keep out the chill of early spring, then returned to the bedside. I would not call my brother as usual that night, for I felt much refreshed by my three hours' sleep. My father, however, was insistent, and I complied. When I bent to kiss the hot, eager lips and forehead that waited for me on the pillow, he held me a moment, and then said:

"Yes, you must go, dear. I forgot again and talked too much. 'Twas all jumbled up, too; but did you hear, Mabel, when I said that all men love love, and hate hate? The whole thing only amounted to that, anyway; don't ever forget it — now go. Good night."

Quiet, but with wide open eyes, I lay on

my bed long time that night, thinking. How transparent things appear, sometimes, Arthur, when we step aside and focus the mind upon them! How strange it was that the world could ever make me forget who I was! But when one is out in it, the belts fly and the wheels hum, and you just forget, that's all. What a strange thing it all is — so unreal, so unsatisfying, yet we hug it so. And I wondered if I should ever forget again — like the rest — they go so fast — they push, they trample; but deep down, love, — love, — love.

The sun was streaming into the room when I awakened, making leafy shadows over the basket quilt that covered the bed. I listened to the sounds within and without doors, to determine the hour. It must be nine o'clock, I thought. Martha was placing the milk pans and pails on the long board near the door of the summer kitchen. The man was already in the field plowing, and

calling fretfully to the horses when the plow struck against a root or stone. Huge, crude, lumbering John — deep down did he have a rudimentary love of love, and hate of hate? Out came Martha again, whistling snatches of ragtime. Buxom, hearty Martha, joking and flirting with John in her harum-scarum way — does she, too, stand for love of love, and hate of hate?

The doctor's carriage halted at the gate, and dressing hurriedly I met him in the hall as he was leaving.

"Your father seems better, girl, in many ways, since you came home," said the good man; "but there isn't much to build on; the heart's weak, you know. He and I are both pretty well done for — seen our best days — not much like when I brought you to them, a morning like this, years ago. I've boys and girls all around the country; brought 'em first, and then took 'em through the mumps and measles and whooping-cough — ought to

know 'em from start to finish. Never expected to see you looking so well and rugged. Them city chaps can slash anybody all to pieces, and make them over about as good as bran' new. Well, I've got to be jogging," said the doctor, looking at his watch. "Sam Bowen's boy stepped on a rusty nail last week; got a pretty bad foot out of it. Over at Miles's they've got scarlet-fever."

Then, with a cheery "Good morning," he drove away down the hill, his old buggy rattling and clattering over the stony, washed-out road.

The morning had the fresh, frosty touch of April in it. I caught up a shawl from the hall and walked about for some time, noting the silent influences at work preparing for later exhibitions of triumph in creation. Arthur, do you really think there are those who, in all the years, never feel the rare touch of Nature as I felt it that morning? How poor must be the soul like that!

When I returned to the sick-room, I found my father, as the doctor had said, brighter and more hopeful than he had been for days. It was towards evening that he appeared drowsy and asked to have the room darkened. He was making ready for the final step out into the darkness — into the Unknown. Hovering peace settled down gently over the white face on the pillow as we watched, until the sharp-drawn lines relaxed, and in their place we saw return again the calm, sweet smile of sleeping childhood.

In the morning, when I stood alone in the hushed room and took his cold, unresponsive hand in my own, I breathed softly the words, "All is well — all is well!" Another life that had touched my own closely had gone out — gone away. "Gone — gone," we say, as we reach out like babies. How limited! How limitless! The universe! Eternity!

53

"As I walk these broad majestic days of peace,
Around me I hear that eclat of the world, politics, produce,
The announcements of recognized things, science,
The approved growth of cities and the spread of inventions.

"I see the ships (they will last a few years),
The vast factories with their foremen and workmen,
And hear the indorsement of all, and do not object to it.

"But I too announce solid things, . . .
What else is so real as mine?
Liberty and the divine average, freedom to every slave on the face of the earth, . . .
And our visions, the visions of poets, the most solid announcements of any."

WERE I writing a story, Arthur, I could weave in everything beautiful, and make everybody good and happy;

but reality is always more strange and relentless than fiction.

Four weeks had passed since my father fell asleep dreaming of love, and now they put into my hand a tiny bit of paper. Not only a few thousand dollars, but a million broken things, hideous and misshapen, were represented by that innocent scrap that lay before me. I crushed it tightly to see if drops of blood oozed between my fingers — no blood appeared.

My plans for the future were soon resolved upon. I would go out to see, to feel, to know the world of men and women. I would place my finger upon the pulse of fevered humanity — find a cure for civilization — be another fanatic let loose upon the planet. Audacity!

Think of it! To wander alone about battlefields strewn all over with bleached bones, cannon, and crosses. To push a woman's face against the loaded guns!

But then, some things are safe by reason of their very insignificance; as mice, they tell us, escape from burning buildings unhurt, or as tiny birds flit all around dangerous places unnoticed and uninjured.

54

"I see all the menials of the earth, laboring,
I see all the prisoners in the prisons,
I see the defective human bodies of the earth,
The blind, the deaf and dumb, idiots, hunchbacks, lunatics.
I see ranks, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, I go among them, I mix indiscriminately,
And I salute all the inhabitants of the earth."

EVEN so I went, even so I saluted all the inhabitants of the earth. I worked with them, I sat with them, I felt with them, I learned from them. I climbed rickety stairs, I descended into cellars and basements; and as I worked my way deeper and deeper into human life I became ever more and more conscious of the staggering needs facing the children of men.

In sweatshops and smoky kitchens I took my place, and, oh! how I grew in love and

compassion. I stood long hours behind counters in great department stores, wearing the perfunctory smile in fear; but here rested the difference — I was free. To an anatomical student, dissecting a dead body is revolting enough; but to be chained to a putrid carcass, as were these — whew! — *les miserables!*

And let no man think the haggard, pinched, ungroomed bodies of working men or women indicate indelicacy of feeling, or so much inferior stuff of head and heart. As I know men and women, plebeian and patrician are dipped originally out of the same vast reservoir. Manicuring doesn't count.

Oh, Arthur, I could tell of incidents and incidents, where the very blood of innocents cried out to heaven for justice and retribution. As I sat one day at lunch with others employed in a great city store, I noticed, across the rough bare board table, a delicate-featured girl, of perhaps fifteen

years. Her manner and language were those of the bright, refined school-girl, contrasting strangely with the rough slang of the place. She informed me she had been in her present position only three weeks, and of her work she said:

"Oh, I like it well enough, but I didn't want to leave my school and music. Mamma didn't want me to, either; but we had to do something. Papa died last fall. I'm the oldest, and mamma isn't very well."

I questioned further.

"No, I don't get but two-fifty a week, but then, mamma had to feed and clothe me anyway, you see. Papa tuned pianos, and he wanted me to go to school every day, when he was alive, but I must help mamma now."

This was a mild case. I thought, though, that I could almost read the future of that great-eyed girl. Everybody knows the world is full of these tragic repressions.

Problems, problems! Every way I turned,

up before me stood some sphynx, looking frank and solemn, saying: "Read my secret." Economic problems, race problems, sex problems — too much talked about — all cried out: "Read my secret! read my secret!"

I wandered on, questioning, testing, waiting.

Many months and many miles were between me and that time and place more than two years before, when my father had said, "Mabel, remember: deep down, all men love love, and hate hate." What had I found? How had I changed? Not at all, — only the old glamour was gone. The far away, the great things, had been brought near and handled. The poor and despised things had been lifted up, and, scratching the surface of each and all, I found — myself.

Humanity was indeed a solid, a unit, rising or falling together. On the one hand, perverse collar-buttons, damp salt-cellars, bread-and-butter struggles — hideous Mr. Hydes;

on the other, soul-stirring music vibrating in serene love-atmospheres — joyous Dr. Jekylls.

Savage or escaped felon, do you not, from ambush or hiding-place, sometimes look up in awe and prayer to the immensity of silence and stars? I know you do. We are kin — give me your hand. The source of life is one.

So, and even more so, I grew to feel toward the men and women I met. Mystically mingled, gold and dross, animal and angel — bondmen forever — rushing along out there, to and fro, through space, in eternity. Never a moment anywhere but wanting to be somewhere else. Never having so much but they wanted more. God, pity! Not far from me the best; not very far away the worst. They were myself — my very self indeed.

That day, in a distant land, I reached another climax. In the old weary way I

threw myself down and looked off over the city and the river, to the distant blue hills, and beyond.

Yes, it was true. Deep down, men did love love, and hate hate, and on this hung all the law and the prophets. Something seemed to say, "Go back, child. You have seen the ruins of Tyre and Carthage; you have wept in Galilee and Gethsemane; but there is that which shall outlive cities and sorrows, — it is the leaven of love, down deep, working in the human heart, bringing about the 'liberty of love at the end of ages.'"

"*Paracelsus.* (His secret! I shall get His secret — fool!)

I am he that aspired to KNOW: and thou?

Aprile. I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved!"

55

"The world waits
For help. Beloved, let us love so well
Our work shall still be better for our love,
And still our love be sweeter for our work."

YOU know very well, Arthur, the rest of my story. Children of two hemispheres, we met. All that wealth and culture could give left you still hungry; all that discipline and denial could do left me still expectant.

In cap and gown you found me going about softly, binding up bruised and broken bodies; and that was well. But wonders never cease in the realm of spirit — you came, and that was better; I awoke, and that was best. Other daughters should be raised up to carry cups of water to moisten

fevered tongues. I must go out there where souls were a-fevered and thirsting for the water of life.

Lo, 'twas a great day — the day of your coming, — my day!

The message of the little farm-girl, who wept alone for a sickened, selfish world, is to burst forth at last! It is simply the old love-story that men, through all the ages, have been struggling to externalize in art and institutionalism. But the later message will speak of more than love and truth and beauty inherent at the heart of all things. It will discuss ways and means of realization, and fear not.

Men are learning the difference between just and unjust competition, and are therefore losing faith in the fallacy that the removal of the present unnatural stimulus means stultification of individual effort. By dear-bought experience they find, Arthur, that it's the forced, anxious, starving conditions that stul-

tify and dwarf. Souls long to express — why not give them a chance? We cannot any longer afford to settle matters by tooth and claw, or even by craft and cunning — it's too expensive to the race. With rightful access to the natural resources of the earth, the children of men will yet cause the hills and valleys to resound with the echoes of love-lays and peace-pæans.

Yes, a Day of Judgment, as it were, is come. The search-lights are turned upon men — they are seeking and finding themselves. The days of caves and cannibalism we trust are passed. Altruism and reverence have entered into this brother-conscious, God-conscious animal, man. He stands on the very apex of evolutionary Nature, looking off into the starry depths of Infinitude — worshipful and longing to better understand. A new transition-time is with us — forces are falling into line. Ancient slavery gave place to feudalism, feudalism to

capitalism, and what better can take the place of capitalism than a sane co-operative regime "where only naked merit counts, and the rise to eminent appreciation, impelled by one of the strongest instincts of human nature, will be the business of life"?

Even thus, we believe, with mutual obligations, and with advantages for all, shall the great reciprocal aggregation usher in more quickly the riper day of the true individualism. We shall have done away with the monopolistic system that brutalizes men and prostitutes women — then stones the women and kills off the men in commercial warfare! Call to mind the great non-resister who drove out money-changers, but said to the woman, "Neither do I condemn thee, go, and sin no more."

Small wonder is it, Arthur, that the multitudes wait, listening for the voices of prophets crying in the wilderness; and when they hear, responding cry: "Refresh us again, for

we do faint." The world has grown very weary with shams and shambles — with the wailings of women and little children in the market-places, while many run to and fro and knowledge doesn't increase very fast. High time it is for men to much marvel; due time for murmurings to go abroad of race solidarity and brotherhood. Pruning-hooks, plowshares, and peace, against swords, sabers, and strenuosity. This way draws gravity — drive on your chariots of fire!

When heads have bumped up against some little abstract things like love and justice long enough, comes a realization that principles possess weight and dimensions just as surely as stocks and stones and Standard Oil. Yes, humanity can be trusted. It will not eat husks forever when there is enough and to spare at the old home.

In pursuit of happiness? Belt up to the big machinery! The world is large enough for blessedness.

And to think we have lived to see the larger day breaking! To take our place and work together!

What would one have? — *Life!*

Life abundant — more and most abundant!

The accounts balance — close the ledger, lock the desk, go home and rest till the morrow cometh, when new strength shall be given for the new task.

56

"Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,
The lowest as the highest? some slight film
The interposing bar which binds a soul
And makes the idiot, — just as makes the sage,
Some film removed, the happy outlet whence
Truth issues proudly?"

DON'T blame me, Arthur, if I fail you to-day. It's another case of too much housekeeper. The good woman certainly has designs, deep, dark, and dire, against anything that doesn't smack of the earth earthy; but we forgive her, for the strawberry shortcake's sake; also because we hope to be forgiven.

The morning was perfect as well as my mood. I had been making a sort of mental pivot out of that little scrap from the early

English dramatists which Emerson quotes in one of his essays. A portion runs thus:

> "His soul hath subjugated Martius' soul.
> By Romulus, he is all soul, I think;
> He hath no flesh, and spirit cannot be gyved.
> Then we have vanquished nothing; he is free,
> And Martius walks now in captivity."

With an extra touch of dramatic finish, I was going over the impressive third line once more, mentally resolving to consecrate myself anew to the overcoming agencies:

> "He hath no flesh, and spirit cannot be gyved,"—

there she loomed with ample proportions, neatly covered by afternoon white apron — the lights were out! In place of the weeping Dorigen and brave Sophocles, visions of apple dumplings and whipped cream opened up before me, while savory odors of chicken-pie and simmering sauces floated about me. I struck earth with such force that I actually rebounded.

She said she did wish Miranda Peabody would take in the old underclothes that had been hanging on the line since Saturday. She said she herself always believed in washing on Monday; every real good housekeeper did; but she guessed it didn't matter much to the Peabodys whether anything was clean or not; the children were certainly a sight to behold. She said the oldest girl was just like her mother, but she guessed the "men-folks" would be half-way decent if the women were different.

Then she side-tracked upon men-folk in general and her own in particular. She bore down with especial emphasis upon the marvelous mind, manners, and morals of Marvin, her "eldest first-born son." Over and over she repeated, then reaffirmed, the seemingly simple declaration that the aforesaid and the same Marvin "didn't have to lift his hand unless he wanted to."

At first I saw no need to respond with

either amazement or sympathy to the bare statement of so simple a fact. Evidently Marvin could lift his hand if he wished, and I was passive — willing to concede the point and let the matter pass. But as the matron waxed more and more enthusiastic over this crowning climax as it were in the situation, I could not remain unmoved.

But why this animation, this stress and fuss, all because somebody — even Marvin himself — "didn't have to lift his hand unless he wanted to"? To be frank, I have been much puzzled over the matter ever since. It must be one of those cases that they tell us need to be read between the lines.

Well, I'm glad meantime to know the poor fellow can lift his hand if he wants to, and perhaps I ought to be glad because his mother's glad. I'll try.

57

"The old world waits the time to be renewed;
Toward which, new hearts in individual growth
Must quicken, and increase to multitude, —
Developed whence, shall grow spontaneously
New churches, new economies, new laws
Admitting freedom, new societies
Excluding falsehood. He shall make all new."

WHAT a long letter I have written! Since its commencement, early spring has passed along into midsummer. As I glance back over these pages, the thought comes that this love-letter to you, Arthur, might pass as a sort of presentment of many unwritten love-letters pent up thrilling and throbbing in inarticulate human hearts.

Many, many times have I wished you were

with me here, meditating and refreshing, while the life-processes unfold more and more abundantly about me. With you here, joy would be almost complete.

Often I lie down on the ground and watch the little creatures chasing about in the soft mould, among the leaves and grasses. I wonder if their schemes

> "Gang aft a-gley,
> An' leave them naught but grief and pain
> For promis'd joy."

A small world is theirs to us, Arthur, but perhaps great God-like creatures are looking in on us, as we disport ourselves in and out among the taller timber of this earth.

Yesterday I broke a milkweed stalk, to see the creamy sap gush out profusely. Rich Nature! And to-day I broke a spray of blackberry bush, which always reminds me of the bride in white waiting for the bridegroom.

Yes, so we met. And you said, "We two part not again." And here we stand, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and six — two tiny soul-centers — talking of love and the deep things — children prattling — brooks babbling — waves talking to each other along the shore.

58

"So in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendor ever on before
In that eternal circle life pursues.
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs; they grow too great
For narrow creeds of right and wrong which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good: while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round
Who should be saved by them and joined with them."

NOW that my letter is finished, I come back — back to the world and work — back where men throw themselves under Juggernaut cars, missing the meaning.

But rest secure, Arthur; — at the center,

fixed firmly into the innermost nature of things, rests the germ necessary for correcting all errors. Everything shall return and renew, and that on forever. We are building but one step of the stairs leading up to the Altar — let our foundation be placed on the rock and not on a slippery place. In coming days, as in our own day, breakers and builders shall be raised up as necessity demands. Precedent and prejudice reign but for a while — then come upheavals and rendings asunder. The poor world, all lacerated and grown weary to very heart-break, welcomes the new poet, prophet, artist, great soul, who, gathering together the scattered fragments of the imperishable, gives out other poems, sermons, pictures, systems, for men to live by for a season.

Where shall the limitless end? What shall be the morning?

To look off into the future, and see men still forming and destroying, like little chil-

dren playing in the sand, tests trustfulness and patience for the moment. Still, the Voice says: "Not in time or space, but within, lies the land you seek — the land of promise. Behold! Be!"

And beholding, I cry aloud, "O Lord, my soul breaketh, for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgments at all times."

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